GAMBIT

How to Defend in Chess

Learn from the World Champions

Colin Crouch

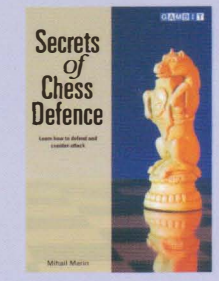
GAMBIT www.gambitbooks.com

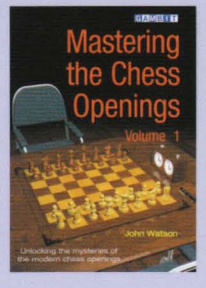
Many books discuss how to attack in chess, but resourceful defensive play is also a vital ingredient in competitive success. This is an area largely neglected in the literature of the game.

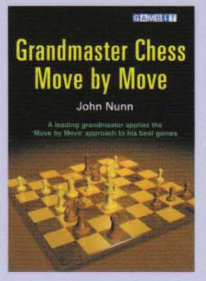
This book fills the gap admirably. Following a survey of general defensive methods in chess, Dr Colin Crouch investigates the techniques of World Champions Emanuel Lasker and Tigran Petrosian, both highly effective defenders. Lasker would place myriad practical obstacles in the opponent's way, and was a master of the counterattack. Petrosian developed Nimzowitsch's theories of prophylaxis to a new level. His opponents would find that somehow their attacking chances had been nullified long before they could become reality.

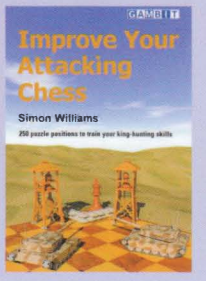
International Master **Dr Colin Crouch** is a highly experienced chess-player from England who has written well-regarded books about openings, endgames and middlegame theory. His game annotations have appeared in several major chess magazines, including *Inside Chess* and *Chess Monthly*.

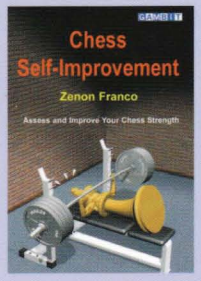
Other chess titles from Gambit include:

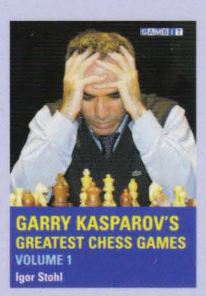












£13.99 $24.95

ISBN-13: 978-1-904600-83-1
ISBN-10: 1-904600-83-2
9 781904 600831

How to Defend in Chess

Learn from the World Champions

Colin Crouch

GAMBIT

This edition, first published by Gambit Publications Ltd in 2007, is a reissue of the work originally published by Everyman Publishers plc (in association with Gambit Publications Ltd) in 2000.

Copyright © Colin Crouch 2000, 2007

The right of Colin Crouch to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

ISBN-13: 978-1-904600-83-1
ISBN-10: 1-904600-83-2
(First edition ISBN-10: 1-85744-250-4; ISBN-13: 978-1-85744-250-2)

DISTRIBUTION:
Worldwide (except USA): Central Books Ltd, 99 Wallis Rd, London E9 5LN, England. Tel +44 (0)20 8986 4854 Fax +44 (0)20 8533 5821.
E-mail: orders@Centralbooks.com

Gambit Publications Ltd, 99 Wallis Rd, London E9 5LN, England.
E-mail: info@gambitbooks.com
Website (regularly updated): www.gambitbooks.com

Edited by Graham Burgess
Typeset by Petra Nunn
Cover image by Wolff Morrow
Printed in Great Britain by The Cromwell Press, Trowbridge, Wilts.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Gambit Publications Ltd
Managing Director: Murray Chandler GM
Chess Director: Dr John Nunn GM
Editorial Director: Graham Burgess FM
German Editor: Petra Nunn WFM
Webmaster: Dr Helen Milligan WFM

Contents

Symbols 5

Preface 6

Principles of Defence 8
The Steinitz Legacy 8
Prophylaxis 15
The Geography of the Chessboard 18

Lasker as Defender 21
L1 Lasker-Pillsbury, Hastings 1895 21
L2 Chigorin-Lasker, St Petersburg 1895/6 26
2.1 Chigorin-Lasker, St Petersburg 1895/6 35
2.2 Steinitz-Lasker, Moscow Wch (3) 1896 36
2.3 Schlechter-Lasker, London 1899 37
L3 Steinitz-Lasker, Nuremberg 1896 37
L4 Lasker-Napier, Cambridge Springs 1904 43
L5 Schlechter-Lasker, Berlin Wch (7) 1910 55
L6 Nimzowitsch-Lasker, St Petersburg 1914 69
6.1 Fischer-Petrosian, Buenos Aires Ct (3) 1971 77
L7 Capablanca-Lasker, St Petersburg 1914 78
L8 Alekhine-Lasker, New York 1924 86
L9 Euwe-Lasker, Zurich 1934 92
9.1 Lasker-Capablanca, Havana Wch (10) 1921 101
9.2 Capablanca-Lasker, Havana Wch (11) 1921 102
9.3 Alekhine-Lasker, Zurich 1934 103
L10 Spielmann-Lasker, Moscow 1935 104
10.1 Kan-Lasker, Moscow 1935 112
10.2 Alekhine-Lasker, Moscow (exhibition game) 1914 114
10.3 Fischer-Petrosian, Buenos Aires Ct (7) 1971 114

Petrosian as Defender 117
P1 Petrosian-Smyslov, USSR Ch (Moscow) 1951 117
1.1 Veselovsky-Kudishevich, USSR 1969 127
1.2 Geller-Unzicker, Saltsjöbaden IZ 1952 127
P2 Reshevsky-Petrosian, Zurich/Neuhausen Ct 1953 128

	2.1 Geller-Euwe, Zurich/Neuhausen Ct 1953	134
	2.2 Taimanov-Petrosian, Zurich/Neuhausen Ct 1953	136
	2.3 Smyslov-Petrosian, Zurich/Neuhausen Ct 1953	137
P3	Dückstein-Petrosian, Varna OL 1962	138
P4	Botvinnik-Petrosian, Moscow Wch (18) 1963	148
P5	Spassky-Petrosian, Moscow Wch (5) 1966	160
	5.1 Gheorghiu-Johanessen, Havana OL 1966	171
	5.2 Tal-Botvinnik, USSR Cht (Moscow) 1966	172
P6	Spassky-Petrosian, Moscow Wch (7) 1966	172
P7	Fischer-Petrosian, Santa Monica 1966	181
P8	Fischer-Petrosian, Buenos Aires Ct (5) 1971	190
	8.1 Fischer-Gheorghiu, Buenos Aires 1970	197
	8.2 Bronstein-Smyslov, USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1971	198
	8.3 Tal-Smyslov, USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1971	199
	8.4 Hübner-Petrosian, Seville Ct (7) 1971	200
P9	Tal-Petrosian, USSR Ch (Erevan) 1975	201
	9.1 Karpov-Petrosian, Milan 1975	211
	9.2 Kasparov-Petrosian, Banja Luka 1979	212
P10	Kasparov-Petrosian, Tilburg 1981	212
	Index of Openings	221
	Index of Players	222
	Index of Games	222

Symbols

+	check
++	double check
#	checkmate
!!	brilliant move
!	good move
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
?	bad move
??	blunder
+–	White is winning
±	White is much better
±	White is slightly better
=	equal position
∓	Black is slightly better
∓	Black is much better
–+	Black is winning
Ch	championship
Cht	team championship
Wch	world championship
Ct	candidates event
IZ	interzonal event
Z	zonal event
OL	olympiad
jr	junior event
wom	women's event
mem	memorial event
rpd	rapidplay game
corr.	correspondence game
1-0	the game ends in a win for White
½-½	the game ends in a draw
0-1	the game ends in a win for Black
(*n*)	*n*th match game
(D)	see next diagram

Preface

'Winning' is probably a more common word than 'chess' in the titles of chess books. Yet 'not losing' is just as important; defensive skill is an essential part of any strong player's repertoire.

It is now well understood that an advantage may be genuine enough, but insufficient to force a win against good play. For the player with the worse position to carry such a position through to safety is the very basis of any sophisticated defensive technique. The player who starts a game with the black pieces will from the outset be confronted with the problem of defence; most of the defensive achievements presented in this book are with Black.

Steinitz was perhaps the first great defender in chess, and his successor Lasker paid generous tribute to Steinitz's achievements in this field. It has to be said that many of his opponents helped him along by going straight for the attack, even when the position did not justify it.

Two other World Champions have had particularly awesome reputations as defenders, Emanuel Lasker and Tigran Petrosian. Lasker, it seemed, could escape from anything. He had the knack of being able, when under pressure, to generate positions of the most unbelievable complexity, making it almost impossible for the opponent to find a clear way with his threats. And when he could not pull this method of defence off, he had a remarkable ability to look at the ruins of his own position, and somehow, with a few primitive implements, to build fortresses out of the rubble. To follow a logical plan when you have a good position is the normal skill of any competent chess-player; to be able to do so when your position is close to lost is a much rarer skill.

Petrosian's great defensive skill, on the other hand, was to have a superb awareness of how to bring even a slightly troublesome position to safety; his one weakness was that he was often too inclined to try to bring *any* position to safety, when a more aggressive player might legitimately have been seeking victory. Petrosian was an excellent tactician, and he could match even the best attackers in exchanges of tactical blows. He was therefore good in a crisis, but his distinctive style was directed towards such a crisis never occurring in the first place, through elaborate and careful prophylactic manoeuvring.

This book gives ten complete games by each of Lasker and Petrosian, together with supplementary games. The main games include examples of play from almost every World Champion from Steinitz onwards, and several of them are taken from World Championship matches. This can hardly be described as a 'best games' collection, in that in several cases, with Lasker especially, we see

the featured player trying desperately to escape from a dire position created by previous poor play. Nevertheless, the games as a whole form an important part of the creative legacy, in the field of defence especially, of both the main featured players. The games have been selected so that a wide range of defensive tasks are featured. In writing the notes, I have attempted to concentrate on the positional logic of play rather than on the listing of variations, as this is an aspect that tends to get underplayed as *Informator*-style notes increasingly predominate. Even so, variations are important, and need to be considered. Probably most readers will find it best to play through the games fairly quickly at first, paying due attention to the verbal notes, and then on a second reading focus on the detailed interaction of play at critical points.

It is also a personal pleasure to try to gain a closer understanding of the play of Lasker and Petrosian. Only in recent years, as a result of having written a book on the Hastings 1895 tournament, have I appreciated what an outstanding player Lasker was by the standard of his times. Here was a player who, in the years after Hastings, could play in the occasional strong tournament, win against strong opposition by a massive margin, and then drop out for a while to pursue other interests. And as the standard of play among the strongest players started to improve, Lasker's play improved too, even when he was in his fifties.

Petrosian was World Champion in my very youngest days of playing chess. His manoeuvring and indirect playing style made quite an impression on me in my younger days, and I was among the minority who expected him to win his match with Fischer in 1971, and thus stop the famed Fischer-Spassky match in 1972 from ever taking place. Even now I find it surprising that Petrosian did not somehow convert a few more of the advantages he secured in the first half of the match, and build up a winning lead. Maybe he did not have the burning psychological desire to beat Fischer. The impression is easily given that he was one of the more relaxed of the world champions, the man who said that he never knew Fischer well, because he never drank wine with him.

Colin Crouch
Harrow Weald
January 2000

Principles of Defence

The Steinitz Legacy

Wilhelm Steinitz is almost universally regarded as the founding father of modern positional play, the man who taught us that defence as well as attack is important, and who showed us that if an attack is launched on inadequate positional grounds, it must fail against proper defensive play. Before Steinitz, the prevailing tendency was to believe that he who attacks better wins; one magician plays another, and the sorcerer with the greater and more imaginative repertoire is rewarded with victory. Steinitz argued strongly however that there were times when you should attack, and there were times when you shouldn't; and parts of the board where you should attack, and parts where you shouldn't. You are entitled to attack when you are better, and indeed you are then obliged to attack, as otherwise your advantage will be dissipated. The attack should be directed at the part of the board where the advantage of attacker over defender is greatest. This is as likely to mean pressure on the part of the board away from the king as a direct attack on the king. Various positional aspects, such as pawn weaknesses in the opposing camp, and control of open lines and outpost squares, came more prominently into play, and the idea gradually took hold that the opening could be played not just as the prelude to a kingside attack, but rather as the prelude to securing positional advantages. For the generation that followed Steinitz, 'the accumulation of small advantages' represented the basis of positional play.

Defence plays a fundamental role in the Steinitz system as the means by which an ill-advised attack is to be repulsed. How though should such a defence be conducted? Lasker, while making no particular attempt to systematize Steinitz's teachings, showed great interest in this aspect. In *Lasker's Manual of Chess*, he suggests, following Steinitz, two basic principles of defence:

1) *The principle of economy*: Whoever is at a disadvantage and under attack must defend himself, and this necessarily involves concessions. The principle of economy is that the smallest concession possible should be made, 'not an ounce more, not the dot of an "i" too much'. If, for example, you are under attack on the kingside, and by moving a piece across you can cover your opponent's threats, then do so. Do not, however, try to pack your kingside by moving everything over 'just in case'; your pieces will almost certainly be more effective elsewhere.

2) *Strengthening the lines of least resistance*: The ideal defensive position is one in which all lines of resistance are equally strong, with no weak link in the chain. If 'the stability of a position is to be gauged by its least stable point', there is an implication first that one should defend one's worst weaknesses voluntarily, and secondly that the creation of fresh weaknesses should be avoided. In particular, great care should be taken regarding pawn moves; a piece may when appropriate return to a square it has earlier left, whereas a pawn move is irreversible. If a pawn loses control of an important defensive square, that control is lost forever.

Lasker then gave several examples of defence, by Steinitz and by his predecessors, to show just why it was that Steinitz's method was superior.

1) Pre-Steinitz

a) Labourdonnais – McDonnell (*Lasker's Manual of Chess*, p. 246)

W

Labourdonnais – McDonnell
London, 4th match, 4th game, 1834

(White has moved his king, and cannot castle.)

Black, having earlier faced a nasty pin on the h4-d8 diagonal, imaginatively broke out with a queen sacrifice (...♘f6x♘d5), and now has two minor pieces, two pawns and a substantial attack for the queen. Black's minor pieces command the board, and it is difficult for White to find ways of relieving the pressure by exchanging.

Play continued **18 b3 ♗a5 19 a3 ♖ac8 20 ♖g1** (20 b4 ♘xb4 21 axb4 ♗xb4 22 ♗a2 ♗xf3 23 gxf3 ♖c2 –+ Lasker) **20...b5 21 ♗xb5 ♗xf3 22 gxf3 ♘d4 23 ♗c4 ♘xf3+ 24 ♔f2 ♘xd2 25 ♖xg7+ ♔f6 26 ♖f7+ ♔g6 27 ♖b7 ♘dxc4 28 bxc4 ♖xc4** and Black won.

Lasker criticized 18 b3, on the grounds that, rather than securing the bishop on c4, it merely weakens the queenside. Also it does not strengthen the weak link on f3, and Black later breaks through by an exchange on f3 followed by a capture there. Lasker recommended instead 18 ♖f1!?, offering an exchange sacrifice in two ways (...♘xf1; ...♗a5). Black would be slightly ahead in material after winning the exchange (♖+♘/♗+2♙ vs ♕), but White will then have the chance to coordinate his pieces. To attempt to win this position as Black, particularly with a weakness on the g8-a2 diagonal, would require considerable technical skill.

This example does not seem particularly convincing. 18 ♖f1 ♗a5 19 ♖f2, as given by Lasker, is answered by 19...♖ac8!, bringing the last undeveloped piece into the attack, and threatening ...♘b4. If then 20 a3 b5 21 ♗xb5 ♘d4 22 ♘xd4?, Black has 22...♖c1#. Maybe White cannot do better than

the despised 20 b3, but then Black can win with 20...b5 21 ♗xb5 ♘b4 22 ♕b1 (22 ♕e2 ♘bc2#) 22...♘bc2+ 23 ♔e2 ♘a3 (exploiting the forced weakness) 24 ♕d3 ♖c3 trapping the queen in mid-board.

Lasker's comments about Labourdonnais failing as a result of not understanding the Steinitz theories, developed some fifty years later, are overstated. Given White's weakness on the c-file, trying to slow Black down by cementing the bishop on c4 is reasonable. Indeed, if anything, Lasker's notes themselves suggest neglect of the principles of attack; a player with the attack should not try to make gains in the shortest period possible, but should keep the tension, bringing new pieces into the attack, to ensure that the ultimate gain is as great as possible. One feels that McDonnell, having sacrificed his queen, would not have been so petty as to snatch the exchange at the first opportunity.

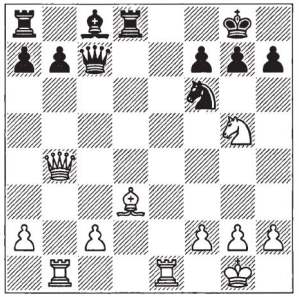
If White wants to stay in the game, he should probably try 18 b3 ♗a5 19 ♔f2!, looking for a spare moment to bring the undeveloped rook across to a central file, or even to bring the rook on d2 into play if Black neglects to capture. Black must still be better after 19...♗xd2, but at least White can make a fight of it.

Allowances must be made for the fact that Lasker was trying to prove a theoretical point; he might well have tried something else during a game. Even so, two interesting points emerge; that Lasker was inclined to overestimate the power of defence (he was in his tournament play often to get into trouble as a result of this), and that, at least while explaining the theories of Steinitz, he was inclined to place the avoidance of weaknesses as a higher priority than the mobilization and coordination of pieces. Nimzowitsch, as we shall see later, had a slightly different slant on matters.

Lasker's second example is more convincing.

b) Morphy – Anderssen

B



Morphy – Anderssen
Paris (7) 1858

White is ahead in development, which is of itself important only if he can fix a weakness in the opponent's position. This is the basis of what might be called the Morphy-Steinitz theory. A lead in development is an important *temporary* advantage, which tends to fade if nothing is done with it. What is important is that it should be converted to a *permanent* advantage. White's chances of accomplishing this seem promising, as Black is definitely weak on f7, and there are question marks over the pawn on b7, and the various entry points for White on the

e-file. The defensive task is to find some adequate way of covering these sore spots without conceding anything that might be regarded as a permanent disadvantage. Anderssen had less sophisticated ideas. He was not concerned with the distinction between temporary advantages and permanent advantages, and was concerned solely with attempting to match his opponent's piece activity, come what may. After **18...a5? 19 ♕e7**, Black's superficial pawn thrust had merely succeeded in driving the white queen to a better square, while creating extra weaknesses on the queenside. White later won.

Lasker suggested instead 18...b6!, placing the pawn on a safe square. If then 19 ♖e7, Black plays 19...♕d6! and everything holds for the time being (20 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 21 ♘xf7 ♖e6! 22 ♘h6+ ♔h8 23 ♘f5 g6 24 ♗c4 ♖xe7 25 ♘xe7 ♗b7 ±, but maybe not +–). Alternatively, if 19 ♗c4, then 19...♖d7 20 ♘xf7 ♗a6!? 21 ♘h6++ ♔h8 22 ♗xa6 gxh6. Black is then a pawn down, and his kingside pawn-structure is wrecked for any endgame. How, one wonders, may this possibly be called any kind of successful defence? The point is that Black, whose position was in danger of total collapse, has kept his defensive concessions to a minimum, and now has serious weaknesses only on a very limited sector of the board, basically the kingside squares on the a1-h8 long diagonal. Even these weaknesses may be covered by Black shifting his rooks to the kingside, and White might even start to encounter problems himself, as the rooks would be bearing down on files leading directly to the white king. Lasker does not deny that Black may still be heading for a loss against accurate play – that was in the nature of the original position (and indeed after 19 ♗c4 ♖d7 20 ♘xf7 ♗a6, 21 ♗b3!, Burgess, is strong) – but he is arguing that by following the 'ethics of defence' Black is creating the maximum possible difficulties for the attacker, and so maximizing his chances of escaping. Lasker's greatest escapes, of which we shall encounter several in this volume, were usually achieved by precisely this way of thinking. Sometimes games have to be lost; that is inevitable in chess as we are only human, but by creative and accurate defence we may keep these accidents to a minimum.

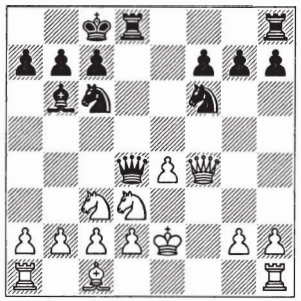
This example is difficult, and may perhaps be discouraging for the reader who was hoping for a few tips on where to put pieces in front of the castled king to ward off all possible danger. But the defence of difficult positions is by definition never going to be easy, and will require creative thinking, accurate calculation, and the flexibility of thought to encompass sudden and radical changes in the strategic layout of the position. Those readers who have not already been discouraged by the thought of the sheer levels of creativity often required in defence will, I hope, take comfort from the thought that watching a well-played defence can often be one of the greatest entertainments in chess.

It is time to see Lasker guide us through some of Steinitz's finest defensive achievements – with the warning that later analysis will dispute some of Lasker's analysis.

2) Steinitz in Defence

a) Steinitz – Golmayo

W



Steinitz – Golmayo
Havana 1889

Steinitz was a great believer in the power of defence, and here he plays on the principle that an extra central pawn is worth a little trouble. The impression is easily given that Black has an overwhelming initiative in return for the sacrificed pawn, but Steinitz soon turned the position round. The immediate weakness that has to be covered in White's position is the pawn on e4; if this falls, the whole edifice collapses. There might just be a case for 12 ♖e1 followed by ♔d1, but this is passive, and does little to help White's queenside development. Instead, the knight on d3 should move, to leave this square open for the d-pawn. So where should the knight move? It so happens that there is not much choice, ♘f2 or ♘e1, but since the pawn on c2 is an important secondary weakness, and since the pawn on g2 could also come under attack, there is only one real option, **12 ♘e1!**. Black attempted to prevent White's intended d2-d3 advance by tactical means, but after **12...♘b4?! 13 a3!** (13 d3?? ♘xc2) **13...♖he8 14 axb4 ♘xe4 15 ♕f5+!** followed by ♘xe4, Black's attack had been decisively beaten back.

Naturally Golmayo did not have to impale himself on Steinitz's defences so readily. His one thought appears to have been that as he has gambited a pawn, he must attack with all possible speed. His initiative was not yet strong enough to justify the search for a knockout blow. There are plenty of ways in which Black could have played it to reach a position with good compensation for the pawn, and I would, for example, prefer Black's position after 12...♖he8 13 d3 ♕d7!?, and if 14 ♗e3, then 14...♘g4 15 ♗xb6 axb6 with a dangerous initiative.

Lasker did not attempt to explore these possibilities, noting only Steinitz's defensive idea without looking for improvements for Golmayo. If Golmayo had asked himself how he was going to avoid losing a position a pawn down, he would have concentrated on keeping his pieces active and well coordinated, and ensuring that White's pieces never took control.

b) Ponce & Chigorin – Gavilan & Steinitz

The following position is from a consultation game, and is perhaps the most interesting of the examples that Lasker gives. Steinitz's opponents get into trouble by failing to defend in the Steinitz manner!

Black intends 24...g4 25 ♗e2 g3 26 hxg3 ♖xg3 with the decisive threat of

W

Ponce & Chigorin – Gavilan & Steinitz
Havana 1889

...♖xg2+. With four pieces and a pawn directly backing up Black's attack, White is under severe pressure.

In the game, White tried to delay Black's pawn advance with **24 h3**, but Black played **24...g4!** just the same; if then 25 ♗xg4, Black replies 25...♖gxg4 26 hxg4 ♖xf2 with a decisive attack. After **25 hxg4 h5!**, it is clear that White will not survive if Black is allowed to play ...hxg4, while 26 gxh5 ♖xf3 wins a piece for Black. **26 g5** is therefore forced, but there followed **26...♖xg5 27 ♔h2 ♖h4+ 28 ♔g1 ♕f4 29 ♖e1 ♖xg2+ 0-1**.

What kind of defensive magic could save this unpleasant position? After the game, Steinitz suggested that White could survive with 24 ♔h1!!, a startling move even a century on. Lasker notes that with this White "does away with his greatest weakness", which is puzzling at first, since White appears to be *abandoning* the pawn on f2. This, however, is a concession that has to be made to save the position *as a whole*. If we consider the position more closely, White's weakness is not so much the f-pawn itself, but rather the complex of squares around the king. It makes a significant difference to the subsequent play, for example, whether the invasion on f2 comes with check, or the threat of a discovered check, or whether it is just an ordinary pawn-winning move which allows White a free choice in reply. If the invasion on f2 is not immediately decisive, the poor bishop on f3 is not under such great pressure.

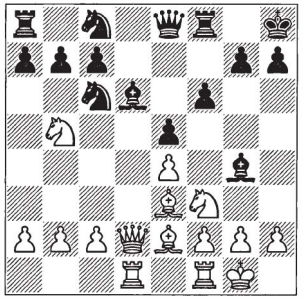
Steinitz gives as the main line 24 ♔h1 g4 25 ♗e2 ♗xf2 26 g3! ♕h6 27 ♕d3 (27 gxf4?? ♗g3 mates), and White, despite being a pawn down, should have enough play to draw in comfort; it is White, after all, who now has better chances of play along the d- and f-files.

This is a fascinating defensive idea, even if one is forced to admit that there are still ways in which Black could claim an advantage, the most direct being 24...g4 25 ♗e2 ♖xe4. A central pawn is, after all, worth winning. Playing an uncomfortable position is better than having your king annihilated, and this was the basic choice facing White.

c) Chigorin – Steinitz

Lasker's final example (*see the following diagram*) shows Steinitz's trademark play – patient piece manoeuvring with an absolute minimum of pawn moves in a passive position. The natural move is 14...a6, but this weakens the dark squares on the queenside; Black will find it difficult ever to play ...♘b6, while if White

B

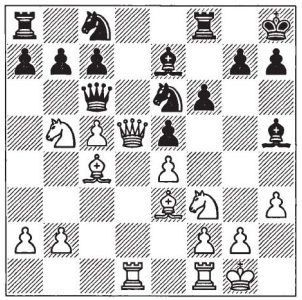


Chigorin – Steinitz
Havana Wch (3) 1889

later plays ♘d5, the reply ...c6 would leave a definite complex of weak squares.

Instead there followed: **14...♘d8 15 c4 ♘e6 16 h3 ♗h5 17 c5 ♗e7 18 ♕d5 ♕c6 19 ♗c4** *(D)*.

B



Has Steinitz gone too far in his reluctance to play pawn moves? The white knight on b5 is in an aggressive position, and presses hard on the pawn on c7, while Black's knight on e6 appears unsustainable, and its partner on c8 is totally passive. The main lines would seem to be 19...♕xd5 20 exd5 ♘xc5 21 ♘xc7 ♖b8 22 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 23 ♘e6, winning the exchange; or 19...♗f7 20 ♕xc6 bxc6 21 ♗xe6 cxb5 22 ♗xf7 ♖xf7 23 ♖d7 winning a pawn and keeping a dominating position (variations as given by Lasker).

"Steinitz ponders. What now? Are my principles here at fault? Let me see once more. The points e6, c6, b5 are decisive. Ah, the salvation! No, my principles are not erroneous" (Lasker). So he plays **19...♗e8**. White's **20 a4** was a mistake due to fatigue according to Lasker, but it seems perfectly acceptable, indeed strong. After all, why should White not want to secure his knight on b5? The overwhelming impression must surely be that White's more active pieces and substantial advantage in space ought to count for more than the Steinitzian defensive integrity of Black's position. Of Steinitz's next move, **20...♘xc5**, Lasker attributes the tactical blunder to fatigue; White won the exchange and much later the game after **21 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 22 ♕xc6 ♗xc6 23 ♘xc7 ♖b8 24 ♘e6**, etc. Lasker suggests that the weakening of White's queenside could have been exploited by 20...a6, and if 21 ♕xc6 ♗xc6 22 ♗xe6 axb5 23 axb5 ♗xe4 "Black would have got out of this scrimmage with advantage." Really? All I can see is a massive advantage for White after 24 ♖d7, and it is *Black's* queenside that is due to collapse. 23...♗xb5 24 ♖fe1 ♘a7!? keeps White's advantage within bounds, but there can be little question who is better.

It is not clear that Steinitz's deliberate avoidance of ...a6 actually helped his chances; what happened was hardly a total endorsement of the pure

Steinitz theory of defence. Just keeping pawns back, voluntarily strengthening the worst weaknesses, and following all the other Steinitz principles, is not necessarily enough.

It is perhaps much better to speak of a Steinitz-Lasker theory of defence. In the games that follow, we frequently see Lasker accepting a cramped position, broadly following the Steinitz principles of defence, and then breaking out with a cascade of tactics which suddenly free his position. Lasker seems to be able to accept all manner of difficulties in his position, but if he can just keep one positional asset, miraculously he seems often to be able to nurture it to a decisive advantage, while the opponent's attack just can't break through. Lasker's greatest skill in defence was his ability to render a normal (and inferior) position chaotic. Steinitz's defensive skills prevailed in his day because he had a much better positional understanding than his opponents, who were easily tempted into playing for attack in unjustified positions (Lasker analyses several of the Steinitz-Zukertort match games in this light). Lasker's successes in defence prevailed rather because of his great tactical awareness.

If we were to state the three basic principles of the Steinitz-Lasker theory of defence, these would be:

1) Defend economically; only do what you have to, no more, no less;

2) Don't just rely on one line of defence; put as many obstacles as you can in your opponent's way.

3) If you can, as defender, abruptly change the nature of the position, it may become very difficult for your opponent to adjust, and he or she may start to make mistakes.

These principles are still widely accepted as the basis for the theory of defence. Dvoretsky, for example, stresses the second and third points when writing on the psychology of defence (*Secrets of Chess Tactics*, Batsford 1992, pp. 188-90). And Polugaevsky and Damsky, in their *The Art of Defence in Chess*, concentrate in their examples on the 'sudden' aspects of defence. There is no need to elaborate on these points here, as the games themselves should provide the illustrations. There is, however, a vital theoretical question that needs further discussion, and it is one to which Lasker did not pay any great attention. We know that, unless you are called upon to defend against an unjustified or desperate attack, you will generally be worse when you are called on to defend. Indeed, quite often you will be significantly worse. What happens though when you are in an equal position, or when you are in a very slightly worse position that you do not want to allow to deteriorate? Is it possible to stop an attack *in advance*? If we can do this, surely the task of defence is made much easier? These questions may be dealt with under the general heading of 'prophylaxis'.

Prophylaxis

If one were to trace in chess literature the passages which most clearly show the creative lineage of Petrosian's play, the place to look would be in Nimzowitsch's classic, *My System*. Nimzowitsch was the favourite chess

writer of the young Petrosian, and if we read closely Part 2 of *My System*, the section of the book on 'position play', the influence is readily detected.

My System is undisputedly one of the greatest and most influential chess books ever written, and is a theoretical advance on, and radical re-interpretation of, the works of Steinitz. All masters were, by the time that Nimzowitsch wrote, fully aware of Steinitz's "principle of the accumulation of small advantages", and this gave definite guidance for players both strong and weak about how the game should be planned. When you are in the better position, you should beware the temptation of immediately aiming for the killer blow, and should instead gradually build up your position until the game is fully ripe for a final decision. When equal or worse, you should concentrate on creating a stable position before aiming for an attack. Apart from certain clearly specified cases, aiming for an attack when in the worse position will, against properly played defence, merely bring your position crashing into the rocks. Steinitz understood this point particularly well, but his opponents less so, and so the Steinitzian defensive technique prevailed.

Yet Nimzowitsch was splendidly dismissive of the idea of the accumulation of small advantages, describing it, along with "the obsession to be forever doing something", as one of the "noxious weeds which choke a proper understanding of position play." Was this mere iconoclasm, or did he have something new to say? If we look at the games of Petrosian, he, more than any other World Champion, was free of the moral obligation to be doing something. In many of his games he spent remarkable amounts of time doing nothing much, not even engaging in battle for apparent key squares, but instead re-arranging his pieces behind the lines (as indeed Steinitz often did). What exactly was Petrosian doing in all this? Why did he have the reputation of being as slippery as an eel? And what exactly did Nimzowitsch, also renowned for apparently meaningless and interminable manoeuvres, see as the heart of positional play?

"Positional moves as I conceive them", notes Nimzowitsch, "are in general neither threatening nor defensive ones, but rather moves designed to give our position security in its wider sense, and to this end it is necessary for our pieces to establish contact with the enemy's strategically important points or our own." Such moves, Nimzowitsch notes shortly after, are termed "prophylactic" moves, although they may of course be described in other terms. Smyslov, for example, constantly stated as his creative credo "the search for harmony". Other great players in the modern positional style, such as Capablanca and Karpov, have been renowned for their ability to maintain the inner coordination of their forces, and to avoid the need to leave weaknesses, in positions both good and bad. What stylistically differentiates Petrosian from the other World Champions of positional play is, it may be strongly suggested, that through the formative influence of Nimzowitsch, Petrosian closely associated

positional play with defensive play. He had a defensive positional style, rather than an initiative-seeking positional style. From the quotes already given, it may be seen that Nimzowitsch paid relatively little attention to the question of the initiative, the battle to be able to "do something". On this particular point, the general consensus would now tend to side with Nimzowitsch's archrival Tarrasch, who, though impatient of intricate manoeuvring for position, had an excellent feel for the power of the initiative. Before Tarrasch, Steinitz too stressed the role of the initiative, as the means of creating pressure, forcing weaknesses and then attacking. Nimzowitsch understated this aspect, concentrating attention on such aspects as the control of key squares, the maintenance of good lines of communication, overprotection and prophylaxis. The implication seems at times to be that if one follows the Nimzowitschian rules of sound, positional and defensively orientated chess, a good game will follow of its own accord. Petrosian was always concerned with the underlying logic of positional chess, and this logic was derived from Nimzowitsch. When the opportunity arose, Petrosian could attack ferociously, like any top-class grandmaster, but he had the tendency to manoeuvre for much longer periods than others, tidying up his own potential weaknesses before engaging in direct battle.

But what are the roots of Petrosian's defensive method? Here it is helpful to consider another predecessor, who was also a contemporary of Lasker's. Schlechter was in the first post-Steinitz generation of prophylactic defenders, in a lineage that runs through Rubinstein and Capablanca, and on to Petrosian and Karpov. Lasker, before the 1910 match, made an interesting assessment of Schlechter's play in *The New York Evening Post* (cited in Varnusz, *Emanuel Lasker vol. 2*; precise date of article not given), noting that "He develops his pieces steadily, seeing to it that on every important point of the board his pieces keep in equilibrium with the opposing force. The old method was to strive for balance *in toto*. If a minus upon a certain portion of the board had an approximately equal plus on some other portion of the field, to counterbalance the weak spot, the old master was satisfied. ... (Schlechter's) method is entirely sound, and it will be difficult to find his weakness." There is perhaps some implication of 'old method versus new method' here, but the point should not be stretched. What Lasker has perceptively noted here instead reflects a difference between two styles of play, and two different sets of defensive priorities. Players with a *prophylactic* style of play would be concentrating on ensuring that, as far as possible, no opponent is allowed any meaningful advantage on any contested part of the board. The guiding principle of defence, in Steinitzian terms, would be to strengthen the worst weakness voluntarily. The prophylactic player would be thinking in terms of complexes of squares here, and not just of single squares; it would, for example, be more a case of "how do I prevent my opponent gaining play on the b-file", rather than

"how do I overprotect b2?". Covering weak squares is part of the plan, but it is certainly not the whole plan.

Players with an *aggressive* style of play, however, would tend to ask themselves how they will be able to build up an initiative, and then an attack, on the part of the board where they are strongest, and place lesser emphasis on prophylaxis. This does not mean any neglect of the question of defence; on the contrary, a player with this style must, if he or she is to be successful, have a very acute understanding of exactly what positions on vulnerable parts of the board are defensible, and what are not. The characteristic pattern of thinking is, "I am better on the queenside, and must attack there. My opponent is better on the kingside, and will attack there, but I have faith in the power of my defence, and believe that if I attack with all vigour where I am stronger, I should be able to defend myself where I am weaker." In Steinitzian terms, we have here both the moral imperative to attack where one is better, and the principle of minimal defence: do what is necessary, but not an iota more.

The Kasparov-Karpov clashes of the 1980s (and into the 1990 match) represent classic battles between the aggressive and the prophylactic schools of chess, and involve two extremely talented players with radically different conceptions of matters both of attack and defence. Kasparov came out on top in these matches, but that does not imply any sort of ultimate superiority of the aggressive method over the prophylactic method; the battle of ideas still continues, and thousands of battles take place every day over the chessboard.

But if we are to agree with Lasker, and argue that the modern style of defensive play as represented by Schlechter requires separate consideration of defensive aspects across different parts of the board, then the geography of the chessboard itself requires consideration. The account that follows is necessarily grossly simplified, and concerns mainly the question of zones of contiguous squares; discussion of, for example, dark-square and light-square strategy is left for elsewhere.

The Geography of the Chessboard

One feature of the chess struggle that receives surprisingly little coverage in the Steinitz school is the detailed relationship between the different parts of the board. Sometimes one gets the impression that the chessboard is seen as having the same linear structure as a tug-of-war rope – one should accumulate small advantages, attack when one is better, and defend when one is worse, and by following the correct principle pull the opponent across the finishing line. The chessboard, however, consists of 8x8 squares, and various relationships exist between the different parts of the board.

Schematically, the board may be conveniently divided as follows:

By file:
Queenside – a-, b- and c-files;
Centre – d- and e-files;
Kingside – f-, g- and h-files.

By rank:
White's home ground – ranks 1, 2 and 3;
Middle ground – ranks 4 and 5;
Black's home ground – ranks 6, 7 and 8.

Such a sub-division is of course a convenient first approximation, and one would want to draw further distinctions between, for example, the extreme flank (a- and b-files) and the inner queenside (c-file), the latter having a direct strong influence on events in the centre. Also, when considering the middle ground, there is of course a strong distinction to be made between 'my side of the river' and 'his side of the river' (to borrow from Chinese chess, where the two camps are divided by a river flowing across the middle of the board). The fact that complexities may be added is important, since it means that 'everything affects everything else'. Also, and fundamentally for the principles of attack and defence, when we say that a player is 'better', it does not necessarily mean that he is simultaneously better on the central middle ground, his opponent's kingside home ground, the kingside middle ground, etc. What it means, more likely, is that a substantial advantage is held in some part of the board, with the possibility that this will later develop into a serious incursion into the opponent's half of the board. There may, and usually will, be parts of the contested middle ground in which the defender is better. The usual *defensive* strategy in chess, at least for those phases of the game in which there has been no invasion of home ground, is for the defender to build up resources where he or she is stronger, and provide minimum defensive cover, no more, no less, for the part of the board under attack. If we draw the distinction between aggressive chess and prophylactic chess, the usual *prophylactic* strategy would be to attempt to blanket the opponent's strategy at all points, before it ever becomes remotely threatening.

What happens, we may ask, if we decide that it would be useful to have an extra defensive piece close to our king? Sometimes indeed this is a valid option, but we must remember that the newly posted piece will have been removed from somewhere, and that it might have been more effective on this other square. A piece generally achieves more in an aggressive position than in a defensive position, and the defender will usually want to maintain piece activity. An unnecessary defensive move loses more in piece activity than it gains in security. For peace of mind, one needs to ensure that pieces have, both actually and potentially, both attacking and defensive roles; balance is an ideal, with the player being ready for anything.

The early stages of the game will consist chiefly of the two players attempting to create as harmonious a development of pieces as possible in the home ground, while both players will want to contest, in some way or other, the middle ground, particularly in the centre. It is only when some threats are made against a player's home ground fortifications that we may start to think of a direct attack which needs urgent measures of defence. Before this stage, however, there will often be a multitude of skirmishes in the middle

ground, a clear victory in any of which will give the successful player the chance for an attack. In a well-contested game, it is unlikely that either player will win *all* the relevant skirmishes, and the likely result will be that one player is attacking on one part of the board, while the other is counter-attacking elsewhere. An important modification needs to be made to the received version of the Steinitz teachings, which suggest that you should attack when you are better and defend when you are worse. You must also attack *where* you are better, and defend *where* you are worse. If, when you are under pressure on one side of the board, you decline to create pressure on the other side of the board, then you will lose the initiative on that side of the board, and the attacker will dominate the game.

The reader who plays through the games in this book will see that both Lasker and Petrosian understood this point very clearly, even if it has not too often been made explicit in the chess literature. Before looking at these practical examples, one more theoretical point needs to be made, concerning balanced positions. The simple version of the Steinitz theory decrees that you should not attack when you are not better, as the opponent will be able to see off a premature attack, and the attacker will have wasted more resources than the defender in these pointless exchanges. If, however, we recognize that while a position may be equal, different players may have advantages on different parts of the board, then each player is obliged to develop their initiative where they are better. If the starting position is reasonably level, with White having no more than the advantage of the first move, then the natural result will still be a draw, with attack and counter-attack finally balancing each other out, but there will be a lot of dynamic play beforehand. Probably it was the Soviet school of chess that made the decisive contribution to developing this area of positional understanding, but that is the subject matter for another writer, another book. As we have already seen, however, Lasker went quite some way towards posing, and then answering, the critical questions.

Lasker as Defender

Game L1
Lasker – Pillsbury
Hastings 1895
Ruy Lopez

I had considered omitting this game, having previously annotated it in my book on Hastings 1895. However, it is such a startling example of Lasker's defensive magic, and so little known, that it should not be ignored.

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♘xd4

5 ♗g5 keeps a bit more life in the position, but Black should be OK after 5...f6 6 ♗f4 ♗g7. Not so satisfactory is 6...♗b4+?! 7 ♘bd2 a6 8 ♗c4 d6 9 0-0 ♕e7 10 ♗d5 ♗g4 11 c3 dxc3 12 bxc3 ± Marco-Pillsbury, Vienna 1898.

5...♗g7 *(D)*

W

6 ♘xc6?!

All this re-opens the question, famously raised by Réti, of whether Lasker deliberately played badly as a psychological ploy to unsettle the opponent and encourage him to go wrong later. No one could possibly describe this as a good move; Black gains a tempo by hitting the exposed bishop, and takes over the initiative. Neither can the diagram position have been a great shock for Lasker, since it was reached the previous day in Teichmann-Pillsbury, in which Pillsbury quickly got a good game (6 ♗e3 ♘f6 7 ♘c3 0-0 8 f3 ♘e7 9 0-0 c6 10 ♗d3 d5 ∓ 11 ♘de2 dxe4 12 fxe4 ♘g4 ∓, 0-1, 30).

The only objective (thus, not purely 'psychological') explanation for this move is that Lasker has looked at a variation of the Vienna Game, decided that it is so bad that it gives Black comfortable play, and that it is worth repeating for White with colours reversed, even without the extra tempo. Thus, 1 e4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 g3 d5 4 exd5 ♘xd5 5 ♗g2 ♘xc3 6 bxc3, and now 6...♗c5 transposes into Lasker-Pillsbury, but with colours reversed. Indeed a few years later, Pillsbury got

a good position with this, playing the 'Lasker' side. Lee-Pillsbury, London 1899 continued 6...♘c6 7 ♘e2 ♗c5 8 0-0 0-0 9 h3? (purposeless; 9 d3 ♗e6 10 ♗e3 = Tartakower-Spielmann, Vienna 1913) 9...♗e6 10 ♔h2 ♗d5, and Pillsbury was well in control.

6...bxc6 7 ♗c4 ♘e7 8 ♘c3 d6

Preferring to sort out the central position before castling.

9 0-0 ♗e6 10 ♗b3

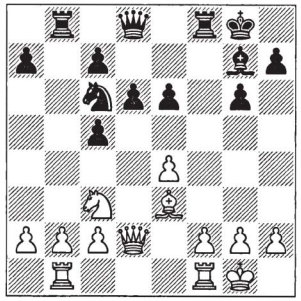
He might just as well have exchanged; 10 ♗xe6 fxe6 11 ♗d2 =. The text-move hands Black a tempo for ...c5 a couple of moves later.

10...0-0 11 ♗e3 c5 12 ♗xe6

12 ♕e2 (Tarrasch) is at least more consistent with his previous play, though 12...♖b8 could be awkward to meet.

12...fxe6 13 ♕d2 ♖b8 14 ♖ab1 ♘c6 *(D)*

W



Black's position is shaping up very nicely; he is already better. He has plenty of pawns in the centre, where white pawns are sparse, and this means good control of the central squares; he is pressing hard on the dark squares, while the light squares are adequately defended. In addition, both the black rooks are pressing down half-open lines, while White's rooks are not yet in active play. Lasker has to play well to stay in the game.

15 b3 ♕h4 16 f3 ♘d4?!

It might be worth considering maintaining the tension with 16...♖f7, followed by ...♖bf8. Now that Black has forced a weakening of the queenside dark squares (b3), there is little further for Black's rook to do on the b-file; on the f-file, however, doubled rooks will make White think twice about defending an f4-g3 pawn formation. In addition, quiet developing moves make it more difficult for the defender to exchange pieces.

17 ♘e2 ♗e5 18 f4?

"A great mistake. Lasker overlooks that after 18...♘xe2+ 19 ♕xe2 ♗xf4 20 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 21 g3 Black could save the piece with 21...♕g4, or he could also play 21...♖g4. 18 g3 should have been played, after which the games were about equal; but after the gain of a pawn Black ought to have won" (Tarrasch).

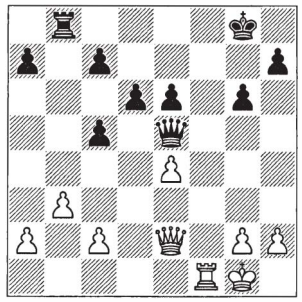
When after 18 g3 the black queen moves, White continues 19 ♗xd4! with perhaps a slight edge. However, 18...♘xe2+ 19 ♕xe2 is equal.

18...♘xe2+ 19 ♕xe2 ♗xf4 20 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 21 ♖xf4 ♕xf4 22 ♖f1 ♕e5 *(D)*

23 ♕a6!!

Lasker has played poorly so far, and is a pawn down without there being any real sign of anything particularly wrong with Pillsbury's position. In the normal course of events one would feel that Black would win fairly comfortably. Since this 'normal course of events' would tend to involve an exchange of rooks on the f-file, 23 ♕f3

W



comes into consideration. However, after 23...♕g7 24 ♕g4 ♕e7 White has not gained very much.

Lasker accurately senses that such a passive approach will not help him, and searches around not for his own weaknesses that he can defend, but rather for his opponent's weaknesses that he can attack. His only real chance is to get at Black's queenside pawns. The pawn on a7 is a prime target, for which he is willing to abandon his e-pawn. Normally central pawns are strategically more important than flank pawns, but the removal of the pawn on a7 would give White something very valuable – an outside passed pawn. The strength of such a passed pawn is precisely in its remoteness; to stop such a pawn queening, the opposing forces have to decentralize themselves considerably, and this gives chances to switch the attack quickly to somewhere else on the board. The game continuation bears this out well.

23...♕d4+

The queen and pawn ending offers Black no great winning chances after 23...♖f8 24 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 25 ♕c8+ ♔g7 26 ♕xc7+ ♔h6. Here 27 h3 is playable (and would be compulsory if Black had inserted 23...♕d4+ 24 ♔h1 before playing 24...♖f8), but White may also consider the more direct 27 ♕xa7 ♕d4+ 28 ♔f1 ♕d1+ 29 ♔f2 ♕xc2+ 30 ♔f3 ♕d3+ 31 ♔f2 ♕xe4 32 ♕f7, when the awkward positioning of the black king, combined with the potential dangers posed by the a-pawn, make it extremely difficult for Black to realize his extra pawn.

24 ♔h1 ♕xe4?!

It is hazardous for Black to allow White the outside passed pawn. 24...c4! must surely be the technically correct move; Black sacrifices the extra pawn, but if White accepts it he has a dreadful pawn-structure, after, for example, 25 ♕xc4? ♕xc4 26 bxc4 ♖b2 –+. 25 bxc4 is more sophisticated, but Black stands substantially better after 25...♕b6 followed by ...♖f8; although there is no immediate breakthrough, it is hard to envisage White holding on in the long run. Finally, 25 ♕c6?, far from gaining counterplay, loses it after 25...♖f8 26 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8, and White cannot pick up the c-pawn with check.

Pillsbury, however, was always a maximalist. Here he picks up the central pawn, relying on his extra pawn, his big pawn-mass and active piece-play to carry the day.

25 ♕xa7 ♕b7 26 ♕a4

White cannot allow the exchange of queens. The outside passed pawn has less relevance in a rook ending than in a queen ending.

26...c6

A weakening of the pawn-structure, but Black does not like the idea of allowing ♕d7, and 26...♕b5 27 ♕f4 ♕d7 is not particularly clear; White can, for example, start stirring with 28 a4.

27 ♕e4

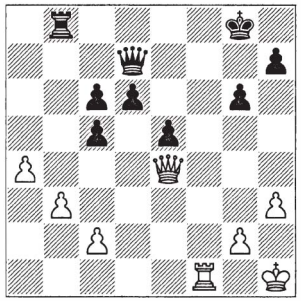
Roles have reversed. It is now the white queen that is fully centralized, while it is the black queen that is in the corner. This is progress.

27...♕d7 28 a4

White must make this pawn a real problem for Black. It is now dangerous for Black to exchange rooks, since the queen can be very effective in helping a passed pawn to advance if the opposing king is nowhere near the queening square.

28...e5 29 h3 *(D)*

B



29...♖b4?!

"So far Pillsbury has played the game splendidly, but now he begins to experiment, and finally loses a won game by careless play. The simple move 29...♖e8, in combination with the advancing centre, must have won with certainty, as the analyses of the two players have shown. It is very often dangerous to move a rook away from the first line" (Tarrasch).

After 29...♖e8, White must push his passed pawn, 30 a5, and simply hope for the best. Then it is not absolutely clear that he is losing. For example:

1) 30...d5 31 ♕a4 and now:

1a) 31...e4 32 a6 and then:

1a1) 32...e3 33 a7 e2 (33...♖a8 34 ♕f4 e2 35 ♕b8+ {35 ♖e1 ∓} 35...♕e8 36 ♕xe8+ ♖xe8 37 ♖e1 ♖a8 38 ♖xe2 ♖xa7 ∓) 34 ♖e1 ♖a8 35 ♖xe2 ∓. Black is a pawn up, but it is doubled, and White has active pieces.

1a2) 32...♖a8 33 ♕a5 ♕d6 (after 33...♕a7?! 34 ♕c3! ♕xa6 35 ♕f6! Black's queen and rook have been successfully diverted to the queenside and he cannot avoid perpetual check on the kingside) 34 ♕b6 (Burgess; simpler than my original suggestion of 34 a7 ♕e7 ∓) 34...e3 35 ♕b7, and White has sufficient counterplay on both flanks to hold the game.

1b) 31...♕b7 32 a6 ♕b5 33 ♕xb5 cxb5 34 ♖f6! holds. While Black has still to deal with the passed a-pawn, White's rook gets behind the row of black pawns, and the e-pawn is easily stopped by the king.

2) Black can take it more quietly, and of course keeps a solid enough position, but after say 30...♔g7 31 a6 ♖a8 32 ♕c4 the position is still not clear; for example, 32...♕e8 33 ♕h4 ♕d8 34 ♕a4, etc.

There is scope for improvement for Black perhaps, but White is certainly not going to roll over. The seemingly minor irritating outside passed a-pawn is always something to work with, and if Black gets his pieces across to the queenside to cover the pawn, the f-file is the avenue for attack.

30 ♕e1

White is in retreat for the time being. Problem over for Black? Not quite; the rook is not well-placed on the fifth rank. If Black, for example, plays 30...♖f4, White can simply exchange and push the a-pawn.

30...e4

Black gains some space, but not yet dangerous space. White has the chance to play around the e-pawn (with, for example, ♕c3) and Black is going to have to spend more time supporting his centre. In fact, the move loses more key squares than it gains; Black will not be able to block the f-file with ...♖f4.

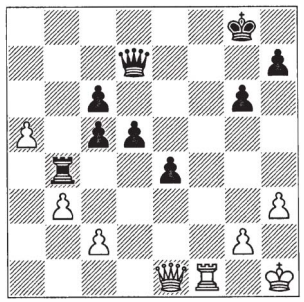
31 a5!

Black has covered all immediate attacks on the kingside, so White should not waste his energies there.

31...d5 *(D)*

All part of Black's plan, but now he is weak on the h2-b8 diagonal.

W



32 a6?!

Play is becoming highly critical around here, and only in the next few moves is it possible to say whether Pillsbury's aggressive 29...♖b4 was better than the quieter 29...♖e8. Black, having forced his pawns forward in the centre, must retreat his rook at some stage. White meanwhile can try to delay or prevent this retreat with 32 ♕g3. After 32...♕e8 (instead, 32...♕e7?! 33 a6 would transpose to the game, which would not be desirable for Black), there may follow:

1) 33 ♕d6? e3 34 ♕xc5 e2 and suddenly it's Black's pawn that wins.

2) 33 a6! ♖b8 34 ♕d6 ♖a8 35 ♕xc5 ♖xa6 and Black has dealt with White's pawn, but now the decoy effect is apparent; 36 b4 or 36 c4 keeps a lot of play in the position. This is probably the best that White can get out of the position.

32...♕e7?

Black too is slow on the uptake. 32...♖b8! 33 ♕g3 ♖a8 consolidates; if 34 ♕e5, then 34...♕e8!.

33 ♕g3!

Now suddenly it is a big problem dealing with the a-pawn; the rook is in no man's land.

33...e3

Tarrasch gives 33...♖b6 here as the only move, and analyses:

1) 34 a7? ♕xa7 35 ♕d6 ♖b8 36 ♕e6+ ♔g7 (36...♔h8 37 ♖f7) 37 ♕e5+ =.

2) 34 ♖a1! ♕a7 35 ♕d6 e3 (or 35...♖xa6 36 ♖f1 ♕a8 37 ♕e6+ ♔h8 38 ♖f7 +–), and now Tarrasch gives 36 ♖f1 ♖b8 37 ♕e6+ ♔g7 38 ♕xe3 ±, but misses the decisive 36 ♕d8+ ♔g7 37 ♕xb6 ♕xb6 38 a7.

So Pillsbury's 33...e3 is no worse than Tarrasch's suggested improvement.

34 ♖a1 ♕f6 35 ♖e1 d4

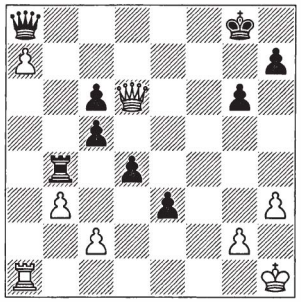
Black has gained a bit of time, but not enough. Alternatives, as analysed by Tarrasch:

1) 35...♕f2 36 ♕xe3 ♕xe3 37 ♖xe3 ♖b8 38 a7 ♖a8 39 ♖e7 with an easy win.

2) 35...e2 36 a7 ♕f1+ 37 ♔h2! +–.

36 a7 ♕d8 37 ♖a1 ♕a8 38 ♕d6 *(D)*

B



The triumph of an innocuous passed pawn. If now 38...♖b5, 39 ♖f1 ♖b7 (39...e2 40 ♕e6+ {simpler than 40 ♖f8+}, and White wins after 40...♔h8 41 ♖f7 or 40...♔g7 41 ♖f7+ ♔h6 42 ♕xe2; for example, 42...♖b7 43 ♕d2+ g5 44 ♖f6+ ♔g7 45 ♕xg5+ ♔h8 46 ♕e5 ♖g7 47 ♖f7) 40 ♖f8+ ♕xf8 41 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 42 a8♕+ wins everything.

38...♖b7 39 ♕xc6 e2 40 ♕xb7 1-0

If 40...e1♕+, 41 ♖xe1 ♕xb7 42 ♖e8+ wins.

This was exactly the sort of game which gave Lasker such a colossal reputation as a defensive player. What he was able to do was find a logical plan and stick to it – even when his opponent was calling all the shots.

(Notes reproduced, by permission of the publisher, from Hastings 1895: the centenary book, *C. Crouch and K. Haines. Notes by Tarrasch from* The Hastings Chess Tournament 1895, *H. F. Cheshire.)*

Game L2
Chigorin – Lasker
St Petersburg 1895/6
Giuoco Piano

Lasker was not obviously the strongest player in the world when he became World Champion in 1894. It was inevitable that Steinitz, the dominant figure for a quarter of a century, would sooner or later have to give way to a younger player, and Lasker happened to be in the right place at the right time. He had produced some massive victories in middle-ranking events such as New York 1893 (13/13) and a couple of matches in 1892 against the English veterans Bird and Blackburne, but he had never encountered either Tarrasch or Chigorin in serious play. So Lasker still had much to prove to the chess world, even after he had beaten Steinitz (+10 =4 –5). Lasker was to come third at Hastings 1895 behind Pillsbury and Chigorin, a good result, especially given his poor health at the time, but nothing to make him unambiguously the best player of his day.

St Petersburg 1895/6, the first chess super-tournament, was vital in establishing Lasker's credentials as World Champion. There were no tail-enders, just Lasker, Steinitz, Pillsbury and Chigorin playing six games against each other. Lasker had a slow start. After a difficult journey, he played an atrocious game against Pillsbury in the first round, and after a second loss to the same player he reached 3½/6. During the rest of the tournament, however, he proved much steadier than any of his rivals. He lost only one more game (to Steinitz) and eventually finished two points clear of the field. Lasker scored 11½/18, ahead of Steinitz 9½, Pillsbury 8, and Chigorin 7. Lasker was particularly brutal with Chigorin, winning their match 5-1. This round 7 game set Lasker on his way.

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 c3

In round 3, Chigorin was crushed when he tried an Evans Gambit against Lasker, his ever more desperate attempts to generate an attack being calmly yet decisively rebuffed. Chigorin was not eager to repeat such an experience.

The complete game is given at the end of the main game, as Supplementary Game L2.1.

4...♘f6 5 d3

Chigorin, probably wisely, settles for a genuinely quiet game, a 'Giuoco Piano', instead of the Greco Gambit with 5 d4. Steinitz, of all people, twice tried the same unsound piece sacrifice in this line against Lasker in their 1896 World Championship match (Supplementary Game L2.2).

5...d6 6 ♘bd2

But possibly this is a little *too* quiet. White could have tried to gain space on the queenside by means of 6 b4 ♗b6 7 a4.

6...a6

Giving the bishop a flight-square on a7, in the event of 7 b4. Later on in the tournament, Lasker the psychologist was to reason that maybe Chigorin was not interested in playing b4 anyway, and so he tried to save a tempo with 6...0-0. Lasker's reasoning was justified when Chigorin came up with 7 ♘f1?!, and after 7...d5 8 exd5 ♘xd5 9 ♗e3 ♘xe3 10 fxe3 Black was comfortable. Lasker's 10...e4 11 dxe4 ♕e7 12 ♕c2 ♘e5 13 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 14 0-0-0 may not have been the most convincing, as Chigorin was able to keep a reasonable position by letting one of his e-pawns drop. 10...♕e7 11 ♕c2 ♔h8!?, with the idea of ...f5, might be more testing.

7 h3

Gaprindashvili-Chiburdanidze, Pitsunda wom Wch (8) 1978 continued 7 ♗b3 ♗a7 8 ♘c4 (8 h3 transposes to the main text) 8...h6 9 0-0 (9 h3!? is promising; if Black castles kingside early, White can aim to start a pawn-storm with ♘e3, g4, etc.) 9...♘e7 10 ♗c2 0-0 11 ♘e3 ♘g6 (11...♘g4! = *ECO*) 12 ♘f5 ±.

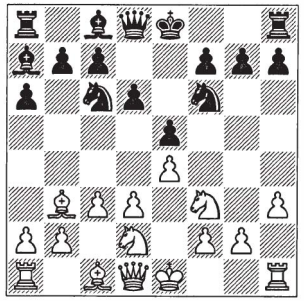
7...♗a7?!

Black will still have to work hard to equalize after this. 7...♘a5! is more challenging, and then 8 ♗xf7+ (8 b4 ♘xc4 9 bxc5 ♘xd2 10 ♕xd2 d5! ∓) 8...♔xf7 9 b4 ♗xf2+ (this tit-for-tat exposure of the white king seems best) 10 ♔xf2 ♘c6 with a difficult position to assess. White's mobilization is a bit more advanced, and he can play ♕b3 without Black having the corresponding ...♕b6 move. His queenside pawn-structure is, however, a little loose, which could tell against him if the centre is opened by either player. It would

have been interesting to have seen this played out.

8 ♗b3 *(D)*

B



8...♘d7

In comparison with analogous lines in the Ruy Lopez, White has gained a tempo (playing ♗f1-c4-b3 rather than ♗f1-b5-a4-b3), but this is a strictly minor gain in that the move that Black has lost is ...b5, a move usually played solely to evict the bishop from a4, and one which potentially weakens Black's pawn-structure. White's set-up is also a little slow in that he will be unable to play d4 in one step, and d4 will indeed take a long time to prepare.

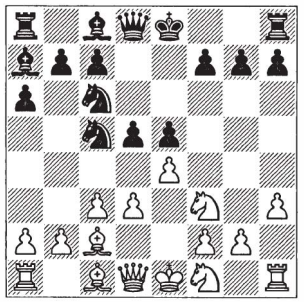
Nevertheless, White's structure is extremely resilient, with any sudden opening of the position tending to open new vistas for the white bishops. If 8...d5?!, then 9 exd5 ♘xd5 10 ♘c4! places Black under a lot of pressure; if 10...♘f4, then 11 ♘cxe5 ♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 ♘xg2+ 13 ♔f1 ♕f6 14 d4 ♘h4 15 ♗xf7+ ±.

The text-move looks over-elaborate at first, but it is surprisingly difficult for Black to find any really effective way of countering White's plan of ♘d2-f1-g3/e3, and taking a grip on the light squares. This plan, involving delayed castling, was a favourite of Steinitz's; see, for example, Euwe's commentary in *The Development of Chess Style*. In this particular setting, Black even suffers from having his bishop outside the pawn-chain, as this weakens the kingside. White's development is not as quiet and innocent as it looks.

9 ♘f1 ♘c5 10 ♗c2 d5 *(D)*

Black will find it difficult to keep the position closed. If he tries to restrain White's d-pawn with 10...♘e6, 11 ♘e3 strengthens White's grip on the light squares.

W



11 ♕e2?!

The prevailing conception at the time was that when the 'attacking' player gains space in the centre, the 'defending' player must create a strong-point in the centre, and play to prevent a sudden opening of the position. White therefore provides some extra protection for e4. But has White, with the advantage of the first move, really been playing so listlessly that he is already on the defensive? I think not. Any player familiar with modern Ruy Lopez games will immediately sense the pent-up energy among White's minor pieces; White's initiative could become explosive if the position were to open suddenly. 11 exd5! ♕xd5 would now be the natural way to continue the game. White then has the choice of 12 d4 immediately, or inserting 12 ♘e3.

1) 12 ♘e3 ♕d8 (12...♕d6 13 d4 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘d7 15 ♘f5 ±) and then:

1a) 13 d4 exd4 14 cxd4 ♘d7 (not 14...♘e6?? 15 d5) 15 d5 (quieter moves are also possible: 15 0-0 ♘f6! with unclear play, or 15 ♘f5 0-0 ±) 15...♘ce5 16 0-0 ♕f6! (but not 16...♘xf3+ 17 ♕xf3 ♘e5 18 ♕e2 0-0 19 ♗xh7+ ±) and Black is fully in the game. Black's defences are surprisingly resilient.

1b) 13 ♘c4!? is a steadier way of handling the position; the d4 thrust can wait. Black is unlikely to want to weaken the light squares with 13...f6, as this could lead to severe exposure on the kingside if White were successfully to play d4. If Black defends with 13...♕d5, there is an important move-order trick with 14 0-0 0-0 15 ♘e3 ♕d8 16 d4 exd4 17 cxd4 ♘d7, and now White may play for kingside pressure with 18 ♘g4!. If we compare with the line given in '1a', after 15 0-0, Black does not play 15...0-0?! 16 ♘g4, transposing into '1b', but rather he plays the prophylactic 15...♘f6!, eliminating the possibility of ♘g4.

2) 12 d4! turns out to be very strong. After 12...exd4 13 cxd4 ♘e4 (13...♘d7 14 ♘e3! ±; the knight blocks the queen's retreat to d8) 14 ♘e3 ♕a5+ 15 ♔e2! f5 (if the knight retreats, 16 ♗d2 leaves the queen in some trouble, e.g. 15...♘f6 16 ♗d2 ♕b5+ 17 ♗d3, when 17...♕xb2? fails to 18 ♘c4, while 17...♕b6 avoids immediate disaster, but after, for example, 18 ♗c3 ♗e6 19 ♕a4!?, Black will need to make concessions to extricate the queen) 16 ♗b3 ±.

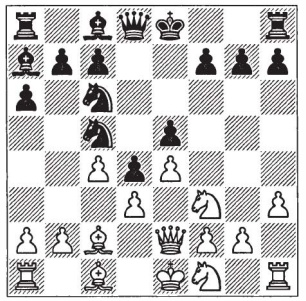
Chigorin was the pioneer in many forms of the King's Indian Attack (for example, 1 e4 e6 2 ♕e2, with ideas of d3, c3, g3, ♗g2, etc.) and it is in his style that he should choose the queen move just here, with an analogous plan of development. The more explosive method would have worked better though.

11...d4

It is difficult to avoid this move. 11...dxe4?! 12 dxe4 leaves an approximately symmetrical pawn-structure, with White having much the better coordinated minor pieces. Indeed, Black's pieces would be getting into each other's way; he wants e6 for both knight and bishop, for example.

12 c4 *(D)*

B



12...f6?!

When assessing Lasker's play in *Masters of the Chess Board*, Réti gave the striking opinion that Lasker, like Morphy, felt less comfortable in closed positions than in open positions, and frequently drifted into danger in

such positions. "But since no closed position can be overthrown by strategy alone and since a final decision can only be achieved by breaking through and opening up the game, none of his opponents can entirely eliminate this open phase of the game in which Lasker is at his most dangerous." As far as this game is concerned, Réti's assessment is spot on; no sooner has the position closed up, than Lasker starts to drift. We shall see later how resourcefully Lasker reacts when the position re-opens.

The centre is closed, but Black has more space. This is to his advantage insofar as it is easier for him to switch from flank to flank, but it also means that Black's pawns are slightly more open to attack than White's. Black plays a pawn move to bolster the centre, but this costs time.

The central pawn-structure determines that Black is the one who should be attacking on the queenside, while White is the one who should be seeking play on the kingside. It is generally best to try to make moves, whenever possible, on the stronger flank; otherwise there is the danger of drifting. It is easy enough for Black to gain space on the queenside (by, for example, ...a5-a4), but he needs to do more than this to make the most of his position. *He needs to open up lines on the queenside.* Since this type of position often results in a race between Black's attack on the queenside and White's attack on the kingside, it is best to act quickly. 12...b5! is natural, but Lasker plays this only after two moves of unnecessary delay. Black has no reason to fear 13 b4 ♘xb4 14 ♘xe5 ♕e7, as the opening of the position tends to favour the better-developed player, particularly if that player has more space as well.

White's best chances of play lie on the kingside. This may seem a little remote at the moment, but Chigorin soon shows how quickly it is possible to build up an attack when the pawn-structure is right. The Steinitzian theories of defence suggest that one should be wary of making unnecessary pawn moves on the part of the board where one is being attacked, and this provides extra cause to be wary of 12...f6?!.

13 ♗d2! ♘e6

Lasker now sees the need for ...b5, but has to play another preparatory move, as 13...b5 14 b4 ♘e6 (14...bxc4?! 15 bxc5 c3 16 ♗c1 is distinctly speculative) 15 c5 a5 16 a3 closes the queenside. White can be happy with such an outcome, since Black's control of the a-file after 16...♗b8 17 ♖b1 axb4 18 axb4 does not coincide with any initiative on any other part of the board. The b- and c-files are strategically more significant, since control of either of these files by Black would split White's queenside.

14 ♘g3

After 14 b4 a5, the pawn-structure favours Black, as White's queenside pawns are unstable. If, for example, White tries b5 at some stage, he permanently relinquishes control of c5, and gives Black a ...c6 break. Therefore White must concentrate on the kingside.

14...b5 15 cxb5!

An interesting and unstereotyped decision. The standard plan would be to batten down the hatches with 15 b3,

preparing to recapture on c4 with the b-pawn, and hoping that Black cannot do much on the b-file. This is the plan that would normally apply if the bishop were on e2 or g2, but the more active posting on c2 gives White the possibility of quickly shifting the bishop to the a2-g8 diagonal. Even so, the pawn capture is a structural concession, and White must be careful not to give Black time for ...c5-c4.

15...axb5 16 ♗b3!?

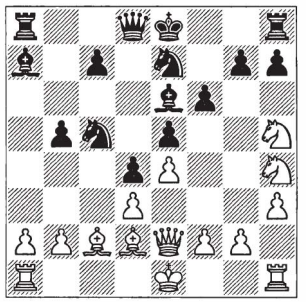
There is also a case for an immediate 16 ♘h4, but Chigorin sees his bishop as a formidable irritant. Black can drive the bishop away easily enough, but in so doing he has to move his knights to uncomfortable positions. The apparent gain of time by Black during the next two moves is largely illusory.

16...♘e7

16...♘c5? 17 ♗d5 ±.

17 ♘h4 ♘c5 18 ♗c2 ♗e6 19 ♘h5 *(D)*

B



Chigorin has handled the manoeuvring far more effectively than Lasker, and now starts to take the initiative on the kingside.

19...0-0

Castling into the attack, but Black's queenside is too unstable for 19...♖g8, followed by ...♕d7 and ...0-0-0, to be enticing.

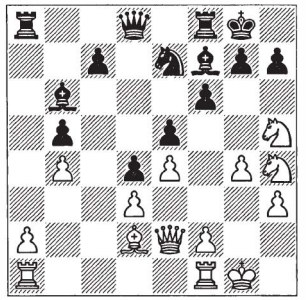
20 g4 ♗b6 21 b4

At first sight, 21 a3 is more natural, but after 21...♘b3 22 ♗xb3 ♗xb3 Black will at some stage be able to press forward with ...c5-c4, whereas White (especially after Black plays ...♖f7) will have too little on the kingside to start a real attack.

21...♘b3 22 ♗xb3 ♗xb3 23 0-0 ♗f7 *(D)*

23...♖xa2? 24 ♖xa2 ♗xa2 25 ♗h6 gxh6 26 ♕xa2+ would be senseless for Black. The extra pawn would be irrelevant, while White will effortlessly open up lines in front of the black king. 23...♗xa2?! 24 ♗h6 gxh6 25 ♖xa2 improves, but perhaps not greatly.

W



Lasker has done nothing particularly elaborate so far, and has restricted himself to natural moves. Even so, moves have to be purposeful as well as simple. By attacking the knight on h5 with the bishop, Black erects another barrier. Black may not yet be threatening ...♗xh5, but this

move remains in the background, as indeed does ...♗xa2, and this serves to restrict White's choices.

24 ♘f5?

Forced to make a choice, Chigorin is somehow scared off the positionally logical 24 f4!, and instead exchanges a piece and sacrifices a pawn to open up the g-file. Whether or not White has a reasonable position after the sacrifice, it is inevitable that such a line is to some extent speculative, and this gives the defender hope.

After 24 f4!, it is clear that White has substantially extended his positional advantage if Black does not capture on a2. There is no need to analyse in depth such lines as 24...♗xh5 25 gxh5 or 24...♘c6 25 ♘f5 in order to establish this basic point. Opening up lines on the kingside favours White, freeing White's e-pawn (after ...exf4) favours White, and leaving a pawn on e5 as a target also favours White. Meanwhile, g7 is weak. None of this could dissuade the attacker from the natural pawn-break, but there is the tactical point that the pawn on f4 temporarily blocks the bishop's route to h6, giving Black the opportunity to capture on a2.

There might follow:

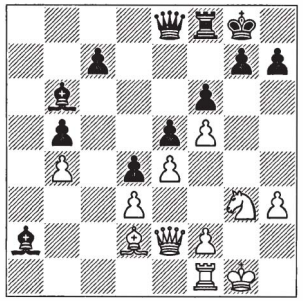
1) 24...♖xa2 25 ♖xa2 ♗xa2 26 fxe5 fxe5 27 ♗h6! (27 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 28 ♗h6 gxh6 29 ♕xa2+ ♕f7 is probably only a draw) 27...♖xf1+ (27...gxh6 28 ♕xa2+ ♔h8 29 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 30 ♕e6) 28 ♔xf1 ♕f8+ (Burgess suggests 28...♗f7!? 29 ♘xg7 ♘d5, which prevents White from maintaining positional control, but after 30 ♘hf5 ♘xb4 {30...♘e3+ 31 ♔g1; 30...♘f4 31 ♗xf4 exf4 32 ♕f3} 31 ♔g2! {avoiding 31 ♕d2? ♘xd3 32 ♗g5 ♕a8!} Black's pieces are likely to prove too uncoordinated for kingside defence; still, there are enough loose ends to make this a good practical defensive try) 29 ♘f5! ♘xf5 30 ♕xa2+ ♕f7 31 ♕a8+ ♕f8 32 ♕d5+ ♕f7 33 ♘f6+! mates. There are various points in this at which Black, by admitting that he is much worse, can stay in the game for longer. Again, this provides no reason for White to avoid the variation!

2) 24...♗xa2 25 fxe5 fxe5 26 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 (26...♔xf8 27 ♕f2+ also favours White) 27 ♗g5! wins a piece, since after 27...♗d5 28 ♖xa8 ♗xa8, 29 ♕a2+ overloads Black's queen. The ♗g5! idea is easily overlooked, especially if one is focusing on the h6-square, and might have slipped Chigorin's attention.

24...♘xf5 25 gxf5 ♕e8!

Temporarily relieving the pressure on g7.

26 ♘g3 ♖xa2 27 ♖xa2 ♗xa2 *(D)*



28 ♔h2

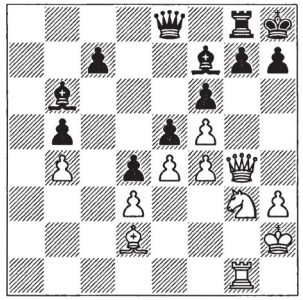
The first wave of White's attack has broken unsuccessfully, and White has lost a pawn. Nevertheless there will be a second wave, maybe even a third wave, as Black's fundamental weaknesses on the kingside still remain. White needs to regroup, but once the process is finished he will be able to attack along the g-file, and chip away at Black's pawn-chain with f4. Once the pawn-chain has been eroded, the white bishop will be able to find a useful diagonal.

28...♗f7 29 ♖g1 ♔h8 30 ♕g4 ♖g8

Black curls up on the kingside, with king and rook protecting g7, the weakest link in Black's defences, and the bishop covering h5, the main entry square for White's knight. These pieces defend passively, as is necessary. Neither of Black's other pieces, the queen or the dark-squared bishop, is required for defence, and neither should restrict itself to defence except in emergency. Instead, Black should play for gains on the queenside, where he is stronger and where White has indeed effectively abandoned the battle.

All this is in accordance with the Steinitzian principles of defence.

31 f4 *(D)*



31...c5!

If one plays through the moves quickly, the impression could easily be given that this is a blunder, leading to the loss of a pawn. In fact, it prepares a sacrifice.

Black does not want to capture on f4, as a possible e5 break would bring new life to the white attack. Similarly, Black wants to recapture on e5 with the pawn rather than the queen. This means that the pawn on f6 will have to shift, and this leaves open the possibility of White playing ♗g5 followed by f6. Therefore the pawn on c7 will want to move to clear the way for the bishop.

31...c6 is the more conservative way of dealing with the problem, but if play continues, as in the game, 32 fxe5 fxe5 33 ♗g5 ♗d8, Black would then have a backward and immobile c-pawn. After 34 ♖c1 White would be at least equal and possibly better.

The move chosen by Lasker creates a passed b-pawn, which is genuinely dangerous. It concedes a passed c-pawn too, but this is easily covered. The net gain is Black's.

32 fxe5 fxe5 33 ♗g5 ♗d8

Lasker has no desire to test whether the position is tenable after 33...c4 (or 33...cxb4) 34 f6 (then 34...g6 35 ♗h6 or 34...♗d8 35 ♕h4). The text-move is simple and effective.

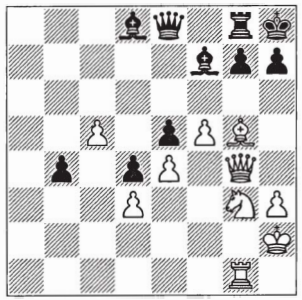
34 bxc5 b4 *(D)*

35 c6?!

Perhaps unnerved by Lasker's unyielding, even aggressive defence, Chigorin tries to hurry things along on the kingside, dropping his c-pawn to set up vague threats against g7.

35 ♕h4! is correct, aiming if allowed to play f6 (and if 35...h6??, 36 f6 wins). After 35...♗xg5 36 ♕xg5 ♕d8, White loses the endgame if he exchanges queens. White therefore

W



has to switch to defence with 37 ♕c1, and this is a switch that Chigorin was probably not ready for. Visually, the position favours Black, but he must be careful not to let his queen wander too far on the queenside, because White has possible switchback attacks on the kingside. White's main defensive problem, if Black plays quietly, is that of how to bring his knight, currently overshadowed by the bishop, back into play. The appropriate manoeuvre is ♘h1-f2, when the knight protects the d-pawn, and can switch to attack if necessary with ♘g4. If Black tries to circumvent this with immediate action by 37...♕a5, then White switches back to the kingside with 38 f6! gxf6 39 c6, with counterplay on three files.

The sudden switching of play from flank to flank is typical of late middlegame positions where the centre is blocked and both flanks have been opened up. This may also be accompanied by destruction of the central pawn formation.

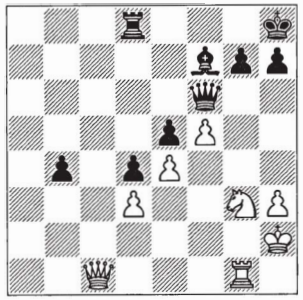
35...♕xc6 36 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 37 ♕g5 ♕f6

If 37...♖g8?, 38 ♕e7 wins the pawn back. White has not yet run out of resources.

38 ♕c1! *(D)*

A good move, but a humiliating retreat all the same, in that he could have reached this type of position with the c-pawn still on the board.

B



38...♕e7!

Notwithstanding earlier criticisms of White's pawn sacrifice, the position remains technically difficult for Black to win. It is not easy to find a way to put material behind the b-pawn while simultaneously covering g7. Black would ideally like to keep f6 blockaded, to prevent the pawn sacrifice that follows; unfortunately, this would keep the queen too tied up. So Black allows the sacrifice, and calculates the critical lines.

39 f6 gxf6 40 ♘f5 ♕f8 41 ♕c7

Still fishing, in the hope that Black's piece coordination suddenly collapses.

41 ♖g7 is the main alternative, when there are still considerable technical difficulties after 41...♕xg7?! 42 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 43 ♕c7. 41...b3! is more effective:

1) 42 ♕h6 ♗g6 43 ♖xg6 ♕xh6 44 ♖xh6 b2 and the pawn queens.

2) 42 ♕c7 ♗g6 43 h4!? b2 44 h5 ♖c8! (avoiding 44...b1♕?? 45 hxg6 hxg6 46 ♖h7+ ♔g8 47 ♘h6+ ♕xh6+ 48 ♖xh6, and Black manages to lose) and White's traps run out, e.g. 45 ♕b7 b1♕ 46 ♕xb1 ♗xf5.

41...♖c8 42 ♕b6 ♗g6 43 ♘h4 ♗e8 44 ♘f5 ♗d7

It's all over now.

45 ♘h4 ♕h6 46 ♕d6 ♕xh4 47 ♕xd7 ♕f4+ 0-1

A decisive check soon follows.

Supplementary Games

Game L2.1
Chigorin – Lasker
St Petersburg (round 3) 1895/6
Evans Gambit, Lasker Defence

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 b4 ♗xb4 5 c3 ♗c5 6 0-0 d6 7 d4 ♗b6!

Now regarded as the classic strategy against gambit play, largely through the influence of Steinitz, Lasker and others. Black willingly returns the pawn, but in so doing insists on forcing the opponent to accept a positional weakness, that of badly split queenside pawns.

8 a4?

Still trying to gambit. After 8 dxe5 dxe5, 9 ♕xd8+?! ♘xd8 10 ♘xe5 ♗e6 11 ♘d2 ♘e7 12 ♗a3 f6 13 ♘d3 ♘g6 was Chigorin-Pillsbury, London 1899. All White has achieved from the opening is a lousy queenside pawn-structure. 9 ♕b3 is critical, but 9...♕f6 10 ♗g5 ♕g6 is regarded as fully satisfactory for Black.

8...♘f6 9 ♗b5 a6 10 ♗xc6+ bxc6 11 a5 ♗a7 12 dxe5 ♘xe4 13 ♕e2?!

13 ♕a4 is slightly better for Black (Reinfeld, Fine).

13...d5 14 ♘d4 ♘xc3 15 ♘xc3 ♗xd4 16 ♕d3 c5 ∓ 17 ♕g3 *(D)*

B

So how does he protect the pawn on g7? White is still in the game after 17...0-0 18 ♗h6.

17...♗e6!

He doesn't! He happily returns a pawn in order to bring his king into safety and gain the initiative.

18 ♗g5

Black should win after 18 ♕xg7 ♔d7.

18...♕d7 19 ♖ac1 f6 20 exf6 gxf6 21 ♗f4 ♖g8 22 ♕f3 0-0-0 23 ♖fe1 c4 24 ♕e2 ♗f5 25 ♕a2 ♖xg2+ 26 ♔h1

Or 26 ♔xg2 ♗h3+ followed by ...♕g4(+), winning.

26...♖xf2 0-1

This is fairly typical of what often happens when the player who feels that he ought to be attacking sees that his attack is not getting anywhere, and that if he plays natural moves he stands slightly worse. He then overcompensates and plays unnatural moves, maybe setting the defender a few tactical problems, but ultimately making it much easier for the defender to turn the attack round and establish a winning position.

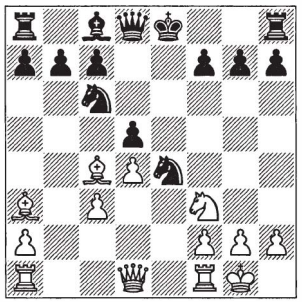
Game L2.2
Steinitz – Lasker
Moscow Wch (3) 1896
Giuoco Piano

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 c3 ♘f6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 ♗b4+ 7 ♘c3 ♘xe4 8 0-0 ♗xc3 9 bxc3

This simply leaves White a pawn down. 9 d5, the Møller Gambit, is now regarded as the only respectable move, although even this is under a cloud after 9...♗f6 10 ♖e1 ♘e7 11 ♖xe4 d6. Well before the main line was established, Lasker had a quick win against Schlechter with 9...♘e5; see Supplementary Game L2.3.

9...d5 10 ♗a3? *(D)*

B



White sacrifices a piece in order not to be a pawn down. Not surprisingly, the whole concept is unsound.

10...dxc4 11 ♖e1 ♗e6!?

Satisfying himself with the extra pawn and the more active pieces. In the first game of the match, Lasker tried 11...f5 12 ♘d2 ♔f7 13 ♘xe4 fxe4 14 ♖xe4 ♕f6 15 ♕e2 ♗f5 16 ♕xc4+ ♔g6, which carries an element of risk, even though Black must still be better. Although Lasker won this game comfortably enough, he finds an even more convincing method second time around.

12 ♖xe4 ♕d5 13 ♕e2 0-0-0 14 ♘e5 ♖he8 15 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 16 ♖e1 ♖g8 17 ♖e5 b6 18 ♗c1 g5!

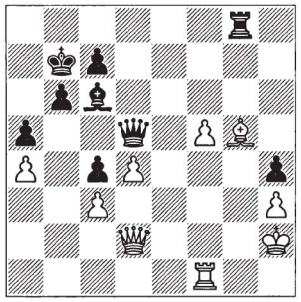
If White accepts this pawn sacrifice, Black will build up terrific pressure against g2, the focal point of the a8-h1 diagonal and the g-file. If he refuses, Black will still be a pawn up! If one's opponent has gambited, a pawn sacrifice, if positionally well-founded, carries little risk.

19 ♖xg5 ♖xg5 20 ♗xg5 ♖g8 21 f4 ♗d5 22 g3 ♔b7 23 h3 ♕b5 24 ♔h2 ♖g6 25 ♕c2 f6 26 ♗h4 ♗c6 27 g4 ♕d5 28 ♕f2 h5!

When pawns advance to try to conceal a weakness, the pawns themselves become a target for attack, as Lasker ably demonstrates. Once Black has opened up some lines, g2 will be indefensible.

29 g5 fxg5 30 ♗xg5 h4 31 ♖f1 ♖g8 32 ♕d2 a5 33 a4 ♖e8 34 f5 ♖g8 *(D)*

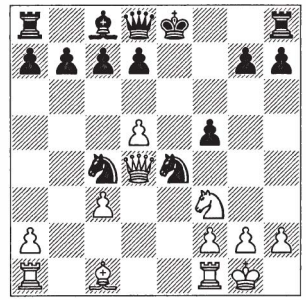
W



0-1

An even more perfect middlegame zugzwang than in the famous game Sämisch-Nimzowitsch, Copenhagen 1923, in that in the final position Black has no direct threats, and no clear plan to improve the already excellent positioning of his pieces, and yet any move by White loses instantly (and some sources suggest that White in fact tried 35 ♖e1 ♕xf5 32 ♖e5 ♕f3 37 d5 ♕g3+ 38 ♔h1 ♕xe5 39 dxc6+ ♔xc6 before resigning). The zugzwang position also speaks volumes about what has gone before. The focusing of the attack on g2 is easily deduced, as is White's attempt, finally a failure, to try to block this attack by placing physical obstacles along the g-file.

W



Schlechter is carried away by dreams of attack, but Lasker is able to refute his gambit play without trouble. 12 ♕xc4 is playable.

12...♘xg5 13 ♕xg7 ♖f8 14 ♘xg5 ♕f6 15 ♖fe1+ ♔d8 16 ♕xf6+ ♖xf6 17 ♖e2 h6 18 ♖ae1 c6 19 ♖e8+ ♔c7 20 ♘h7 ♖f7 21 ♖h8 b5 22 ♖ee8 ♗b7 0-1

These supplementary games show that trying to take on Lasker in an old-fashioned gambit was hopeless (or almost hopeless; Charousek once bested him in a King's Gambit). Lasker was just as strong tactically as any gambiteer, and he knew enough about positional play to be able to exploit firmly the concessions made by the opponent.

Game L2.3
Schlechter – Lasker
London 1899
Giuoco Piano

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 c3 ♘f6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 ♗b4+ 7 ♘c3 ♘xe4 8 0-0 ♗xc3 9 d5 ♘e5 10 bxc3 ♘xc4 11 ♕d4 f5 *(D)*

It was established early on that 11...♘cd6? 12 ♕xg7 ♕f6 13 ♕xf6 ♘xf6 14 ♖e1+ gives White a close to decisive attack.

12 ♗g5?

Game L3
Steinitz – Lasker
Nuremberg 1896
French, Tarrasch

It proved difficult to find a suitable example for this book from the 1894 match with Steinitz that made Lasker World Champion. Steinitz, though a great player and though still capable of exceptional play, was in his declining

years, and failed as White to place any real pressure on Lasker. The best contested games were scrappy, with the advantage switching around rather too much for didactic purposes. Their game from Nuremberg 1896 is rather more suitable for our purposes. Early on, Steinitz set up a mobile queenside pawn-majority, and later was able to attack Lasker's denuded queenside. Lasker was able to ignore the queenside, as his king was not under threat, and press hard on the kingside. Lasker's attack came first.

The Nuremberg tournament was one of a string of mixed-strength tournaments that Lasker won with some ease at the turn of the century. Lasker scored 13½/18, ahead of Maroczy 12½, Pillsbury and Tarrasch 12, etc. This, however, was one of Lasker's narrower victories! At London 1899 he won by 4½ points, and at Paris 1900 he won by 2 points.

1 e4 e6

A rare choice for Lasker.

2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 c5 4 dxc5

4 exd5 and 4 ♘gf3 are both more common, but the Tarrasch System was in its infancy in 1896, and there is no reason why this natural capture should not have been tried.

4...♗xc5 5 ♘b3 ♗b6 6 exd5 ♘f6!?

A move-order twist. 6...exd5 reverts to what are now standard lines.

7 ♗b5+

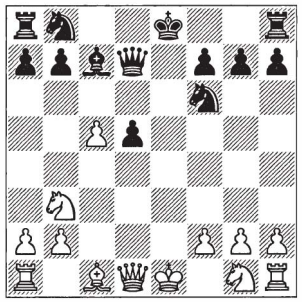
7 dxe6? ♗xf2+.

7...♗d7 8 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 9 c4!?

Reinfeld and Fine, in *Lasker's Greatest Chess Games*, criticize this move, preferring 9 ♘f3. However, it seems perfectly natural for White to want to play for the initiative; the mistake comes later.

9...exd5 10 c5 ♗c7 *(D)*

W



The battle lines are drawn. White has the better pawn-structure, not so much owing to the isolation of Black's d-pawn, but rather because White has the prospect of a queenside attack through advancing his pawn-majority. Black, meanwhile, is ahead in development, has good central control, open piece-play, and chances of creating pressure on the kingside. For the next few moves though, both players must develop.

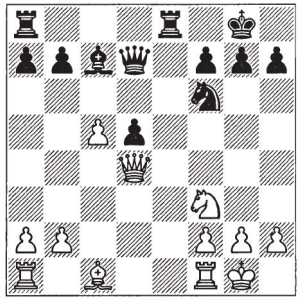
11 ♘f3 ♘c6 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♘bd4 ♘xd4 14 ♕xd4

Reinfeld and Fine argue that this wastes time, and that 14 ♘xd4 should have been preferred. The case can be argued the other way round. After 14 ♘xd4 ♖fe8, it is likely that White will later want the knight back on f3 to protect the kingside, so why move it away in the first place?

14...♖fe8 *(D)*

For the moment, a centralizing move such as this is consistent with either kingside or queenside play, but soon Black must make his choice.

W



15 ♗e3?!

A routine move that Steinitz would surely not have played in his heyday. He presumably underestimated the force of his opponent's kingside attack, and felt he had the luxury of being able to build up slowly on the queenside, reinforcing the blockade on d4 and overprotecting the pawn on c5. This misses the point for two reasons. First, Black's central play, the basis for his later kingside attack, depends on his control of the light squares. Any advance of the d-pawn is likely to loosen this control, thereby easing White's position. Secondly, White's c-pawn may be left to itself for the time being. It is not yet attacked, and other units may be brought to its defence if later required. Steinitz is playing his bishop to a passive position, consolidating on a part of the board where he is not under attack, and doing nothing to cover his kingside.

15 ♗g5! is far more consistent, displacing the knight either by exchanging it or by forcing it to move. Play is probably around equal after 15...♘e4 16 ♖ad1 (16...♘xg5 17 ♘xg5 ♗e5?! 18 ♕d3! ±).

Reinfeld and Fine, although often eager to criticize other annotators for laziness, fail to comment on this move, yet suggest 17 ♗g5 as a possibility two moves later! All other things being equal, it is better to bring a piece to its appropriate square in one move rather than two.

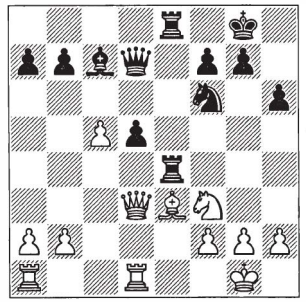
15...♖e4 16 ♕d3 ♖ae8 17 ♖fd1

17 ♗g5 ♘h5 is slightly better for Black (Reinfeld, Fine).

17...h6 *(D)*

A multi-purpose little move, which by stopping White from using g5, and by providing the king with an escape square, enhances the coordination of Black's pieces.

W



18 a3?!

Again Steinitz, in his declining years, misjudges the pace of the position. All Black's pieces are already pointed at White's kingside, and White ought to think about taking measures to prevent the storm from breaking. If one defends only when the opponent is already attacking, it may already be too late!

Reinfeld and Fine suggest 18 ♗d4, though after 18...♘h5 White presumably has nothing better than 19 ♗e3,

tacitly offering the draw. Black could of course play for more, maybe with 18...♖d8!?.

18 ♘d2! is best, bringing the knight to f1. White's knight on f3 was already protecting h2 however, so why should he want to bring the knight to a different square to do the same job? The answer is that a knight on f3 is, as Lasker shows, relatively easy to dislodge, whereas a knight on f1 is very hard to shift, and also provides extra defensive cover for e3 and g3. The old saying that it is impossible to checkmate an opponent who has a knight on KB1 (White's f1; Black's f8) doesn't always work, but here it points to a viable defensive formation.

After 18 ♘d2!, the sacrifice on h2 is unsound; for instance, 18...♗xh2+ 19 ♔xh2 ♖h4+ 20 ♔g1 ♕g4 (20...♘g4 21 ♘f1; 20...♕c7 21 ♘f1) 21 ♘f1, and if 21...♕h5, 22 ♘g3, while on other moves White will consolidate with either f3 or ♘g3. If Black avoids the sacrifice, White's kingside is solid; for example, 18...♖h4 19 ♘f1 ♘g4 20 h3 (20 ♕xd5?! ♕xd5 21 ♖xd5 ♘xe3 22 ♘xe3 ♗xh2+ 23 ♔f1 ♗f4 ∓) 20...♘xe3 21 ♘xe3 d4! (the sacrifice 21...♖xh3 22 gxh3 ♕xh3 does not fully equalize after 23 ♘f1) 22 ♘f1 (avoiding 22 ♘f5 ♖f4 23 ♘xd4?? ♖xd4 24 ♕xd4 ♖e1+, and 22 ♕f5 ♕d8 ∓) and the position is far from clear.

Black's best reply to 18 ♘d2 might well prove to be 18...♖4e6 19 ♘f1 with a tough battle ahead. Although White's knight manoeuvre is mainly defensive, it is not purely passive. Only the knight is required solely for defensive duties, and the enhanced security of the king's fortress gives the other pieces greater confidence in the battle for the initiative.

18...♕g4!

This shows excellent appreciation of the delicate balance between attack and defence. Lasker moves his most powerful piece from the queenside to the kingside. The queenside, without its best defender, is left to the wolves, but in compensation Black crosses an important boundary, that between positional pressure and outright attack, on the kingside. White no longer has time for prophylactic measures on the kingside; he can now do no more than respond to Black's direct attack. But if Black's kingside attack in any way falters, he is liable to be overrun on the queenside. A piece-count suggests, however, that Black's attacking prospects are favourable. He already has three pieces (♕, ♖, ♗) directly participating in the attack and two pieces (♖, ♘) well poised to join the attack. This comfortably conforms to the 'three-piece rule'; the prognosis is that Black has enough pieces around the white king to be able to think very seriously about launching a sacrificial attack.

19 b4

It is useful to get some pawn moves in; he might want to try to queen a pawn later!

With the black queen already in the attack, it is too late for 19 ♘d2 in view of 19...♗xh2+! 20 ♔xh2 ♖xe3 21 fxe3 ♕h4+ 22 ♔g1 ♘g4. Then:

1) 23 ♕xd5? ♕h2+ 24 ♔f1 ♕h1+ 25 ♔e2 ♖xe3#.

2) 23 ♘f1 ♕f2+ 24 ♔h1 ♖e5, and now White's best practical chance is to sacrifice the queen with 25 ♕xd5, but after 25...♖xd5 26 ♖xd5 ♕xb2 Black's pieces and pawns are much better coordinated than White's.

3) 23 ♘f3 ♕f2+ 24 ♔h1 ♖e5! 25 ♕xd5! (25 ♘xe5? ♕h4+ 26 ♔g1 ♕h2+ 27 ♔f1 ♕h1+ 28 ♔e2 ♕xg2+ 29 ♔e1 ♕f2# would have been memorable) 25...♖xd5 (not 25...♘xe3?? 26 ♘xe5!) 26 ♖xd5 and Black has a pleasant choice between 26...♕xb2 (probably best) and 26...♘xe3.

Such variations illustrate the basic reasoning behind the three-piece rule. If an attack against the king is to be successful, it will generally be necessary to sacrifice material to bring the king out into the open, and the attacker will need to have enough pieces remaining in the attack to be able to deliver checkmate. The usual minimum is three pieces – one to sacrifice and two to checkmate with. Extra pieces would be a useful bonus, or might be needed to knock out defending forces (20...♖xe3).

Since the objective of defensive technique is to prevent the attacker from taking decisive advantage of one's weaknesses, it is always vital to have a proper understanding of the basics of attacking technique when planning one's own defences.

19...g5 *(D)*

20 ♕c3

As well as generally gaining ground on the kingside, Black's last pawn-push had the more direct objective of preparing a ...g4 thrust, after which White's defences on h2 crash (see note to White's 18th). White's defensive task is difficult, but the text-move does not greatly help. 20 ♕b5 ♕h5 transposes to the game (after 22...♕h5), and is thus not satisfactory either.

W

The critical move is, as before, 20 ♘d2, the assessment yet again depending on the effectiveness or otherwise of the sacrifice on h2. There follows, however, 20...♗xh2+! 21 ♔xh2 ♕h5+ 22 ♔g1 ♖h4 23 f3 d4! regaining the bishop while still keeping the attack, since if 24 ♗xd4??, then 24...♖h1+ 25 ♔f2 ♕h4+ 26 g3 ♕h2#. If 20 ♘d2 fails, White's position is very difficult.

20...♕f5 21 ♕d3

The point of White's play is that he has deflected Black's queen from control of the h4-square, so that 21...g4? may be safely met by 22 ♘h4. But since White has lost two tempi by playing ♕d3-c3-d3, Black may invest two tempi by playing the queen the long way round: ...♕g4-f5-g6-h5, rather than ...♕g4-h5.

21...♕g6! 22 ♕b5

Reinfeld and Fine note that if 22 ♘d2??, then 22...♗xh2+ 23 ♔xh2 ♖h4+, and Black wins the queen. The possibility of ♘d2 has been critical for White's defensive chances for several moves now, and yet only when it is refuted by a two-move combination do Reinfeld and Fine bother to mention it!

The tactics after 22 ♗d4! are rather more interesting:

1) 22...g4 23 ♘h4 ♖e1+ 24 ♖xe1 ♕xd3 25 ♗xf6, and although White has nominally lost material (he has ♖+♘ vs ♕), it is clear that he has gained the initiative.

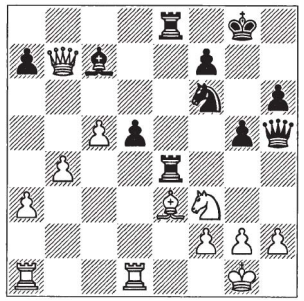
2) 22...♖e1+? 23 ♘xe1 ♖xe1+ 24 ♖xe1 ♕xd3 25 ♗xf6 leads to thematically similar positions, but with *White* material ahead.

3) 22...♘h5 23 g3! leads to a couple of optical illusions after 23...♖e1+? 24 ♘xe1 ♖xe1+ 25 ♔g2: 25...♕xd3 26 ♖xd3 is safe for White as the rook on a1 is protected, while 25...♘f4+ 26 gxf4 gxf4+ is met by 27 ♕xg6+. This is simple enough to see if one is careful, but sometimes it is possible to be carried away by the excitement of attack. White's position is unpleasant after, for example, 23...♕f5 (perhaps best met by 24 ♗c3), but at least he is still in the game.

The immediate counter-attack on the queenside leaves White much too weak on the kingside.

22...♕h5! 23 ♕xb7 *(D)*

B



23...♗xh2+!!

This sacrifice is thematic. It makes an unusually strong impression here, as the general appearance of the last few moves is that White has gained ground enormously on the queenside in the last few moves (true) while Black seems to have been unable to progress his attack on the kingside (false). But Lasker has assessed the pace of the position brilliantly; he has judged exactly the relative balance between attack and defence on either side of the board. White has won the battle on the queenside, but this is not a decisive victory as Black is setting up a mating attack on the kingside. Mate decides the game.

24 ♘xh2

White's kingside is too fragile for 24 ♔f1 to hold much hope. Black presumably has several ways of continuing the attack, the most direct being 24...g4 25 ♘xh2 g3 26 ♘f3 ♕h1+ 27 ♔e2 (27 ♘g1 gxf2 28 ♗xf2 ♘g4 wins) 27...♕xg2 with a decisive capture to follow on either f2 or e3.

24...♖h4 25 f3

Effectively resignation, as Black soon emerges a piece ahead.

What is surprising, and what Lasker must have seen well in advance, is that White has no time to set up an effective defence after 25 ♕c7 ♘g4!. For example:

1) 26 ♕d7 ♖xh2 27 ♕xe8+ ♔h7 28 g3 ♖xf2! with inevitable mate.

2) 26 f3 ♘xh2 27 ♔f2 d4! 28 ♗xd4 (28 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 29 ♗xd4 ♕h4+ −+) 28...♘xf3! 29 gxf3 (29 ♕d7 ♖e2+ mates) 29...♖h2+ 30 ♔g1 ♖h1+ 31 ♔f2 ♕h4+ 32 ♕g3 ♖h2+ −+.

25...♖xh2 26 ♕c7

26 ♗d4 ♕h4 gives mate.

26...♖h1+ 27 ♔f2 ♕h4+ 28 ♕g3 ♕xg3+ 29 ♔xg3 ♖xd1 30 ♖xd1 ♖xe3 31 ♖c1 ♘e8 32 a4 ♖a3 33 b5 ♖xa4 34 ♖b1 ♖c4 35 b6 axb6 36 cxb6 ♖c8 37 ♔g4 ♘d6 38 ♔h5 ♔g7 39 b7 ♖b8 40 ♖b6 ♘f5 41 f4 gxf4 42 ♔g4 ♘e3+ 43 ♔xf4 ♘c4 44 ♖b4 ♔f6 0-1

Vintage Lasker, with vigorous play across the whole board, and a delicate balance between attack and defence on both flanks.

Game L4
Lasker – Napier
Cambridge Springs 1904
Sicilian Dragon

Strong tournaments were few and far between a hundred years ago, and Lasker was such a dominating figure that he felt little need to play in everything available in order to maintain his reputation; besides, he had outside intellectual interests too. As a result, Cambridge Springs 1904 was Lasker's first international tournament since Paris 1900. It was also one of his few relative failures, and the only tournament between Hastings 1895 and Moscow 1925 where he did not come first or equal first. At Cambridge Springs, Lasker scored 11/15, equal with Janowski but two points behind the rising American star, Marshall. One of Lasker's most famous wins was played at this tournament, however: his mind-boggling tussle against Napier. In my first draft of the introduction to this game, I speculated whether modern critics would be quite so willing as their predecessors to regard this game as a classic, since the opening is rustic, and since there are plenty of more recent examples of players accurately negotiating their way through head-spinning and apparently patternless complications. Since then, two new sets of notes have been published, by Nunn in the recent anthology *The Mammoth Book of the World's Greatest Chess Games* (Burgess, Nunn, Emms), and by Dvoretsky in *Chess Monthly*, May 1999. The opportunity has been taken to incorporate suggestions made in these notes, but one may feel sure that even with three new sets of notes, not all the mysteries of this remarkably full-blooded fight will have been solved.

As in so many of Lasker's games, play careered across the whole board, with both players making a whole string of sacrifices in the battle for the initiative. In such sharp tactical situations, perhaps the one widely applicable positional generalization one can make is 'thou shalt not flinch'. Classical positional play gives one player the role of attacker, and the other, assumed to have the inferior position, the role of defender. But who can possibly say who was attacking, and who defending, in this game? Once the centre has been violently opened up, virtually the whole board is the stage for unpredictable skirmishes. In a game such as this, one must attack when possible, defend when necessary, calculate as far and accurately as

one can, and trust one's judgement. Such requirements were ideally suited to Lasker's style of play.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 ♘f3 g6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 ♗g7 6 ♗e3 d6

This position is not given in *ECO (vol. B, 3rd edn)*, presumably on the basis that Black, as here, will almost invariably play ...♘f6 at some stage, taking play back into the main lines. Nowadays, whole books are written on the Accelerated Dragon, of which the position after 6...♘f6 would form a key variation. In the 1900s the analysts had got as far as noticing that 7 ♘xc6 bxc6 8 e5 'forces' the knight back to g8 (although even this is regarded as acceptable for Black), but the sacrifice 8...♘d5 9 ♘xd5 cxd5 10 ♕xd5 ♖b8 is now well-established in theory. Current theory regards 7 ♗c4 as critical.

7 h3?!

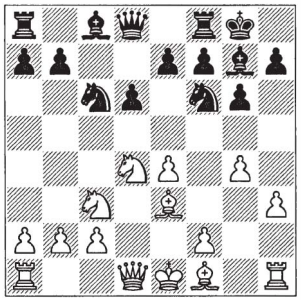
In *Masters of the Chess Board*, Réti gives a long digression on this move, citing in support Marco's comments, and noting that it is strange that Lasker should go against prevailing positional principles in attacking on the kingside with the centre still open. He attributes Lasker's choice to "psychological reasons", and recommends instead "the usual and more natural move" 7 ♗e2.

As so often, Réti's comments, though elegantly phrased, strike the modern reader as far too categorical. One should not *ignore* the centre when one is attacking on the flanks, and if one tries to attack on the flanks while being clearly *worse* in the centre, the attack is likely to be counter-productive and easily repelled. Here, with the centre contested by both sides, a single move at a quiet moment is unlikely to make a decisive difference. The modern player would agree that 7 ♗e2 is reasonable, but would be aware that the critical line is the Yugoslav Attack, reached by 7 ♕d2 ♘f6 8 f3 0-0 9 0-0-0 ♗d7 10 h4, in which vigorous play takes place on the flanks, *with the centre still open.*

Seen in this context, the criticism to be made of Lasker's 7 h3 is not that it launches an unwarranted attack on the kingside. Rather, it is that Lasker is not attacking quickly enough!

7...♘f6 8 g4 0-0 *(D)*

W



9 g5?!

Réti passes this move by without comment (as do Nunn and Dvoretsky), but it is extremely committal. To make sense of this move, White has to continue to rush forward with pawns, but this leaves his pieces seriously under-developed. A more natural plan is 9 ♗g2 followed by 0-0 and f4. White would then be using his kingside pawns as a coordinated mass, rather than as individuals. Given the chance, he will try to increase the pressure

with ♘de2-g3. This gives a hint as to Black's equalizing plan: 9...♘xd4 10 ♗xd4 ♗d7 11 0-0 ♗c6 12 ♕d2 ♕c7 13 ♘d5 ♗xd5 14 exd5 ♖ac8 15 ♖ac1 b5 = Milu-Marin, Bucharest 1994. 9 ♘de2 might be possible, though it looks too slow to be trustworthy.

9...♘e8?!

Black plays tentatively, and the knight takes a lot of time to re-enter the game. 9...♘h5! blocks White's ambitions along the h-file, the only problem being that the knight is itself exposed to attack. If, however, 10 ♗e2, then 10...♘f4 11 ♗xf4 (11 ♘xc6 ♘g2+) 11...♘xd4 and Black stands well. Or 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 ♗e2 ♖b8 with substantial queenside play. If then 12 ♗xh5, 12...♖xb2!? is sharpest.

10 h4 ♘c7 11 f4?!

Another indication that even the top players in those days had difficulties in working out how to handle the Sicilian. In that there is no obvious route of attack on the queenside, Black will have to claim space in the centre at some stage in order to offset White's kingside attack. Black still has possibilities of either ...e5 or ...d5, which makes White's task complicated, but the one way that White would *not* want to meet ...e5 is with f4, after which ...exf4 would re-open the diagonal for the Dragon bishop, and also open up the e-file for the rook, placing White's e-pawn under considerable pressure.

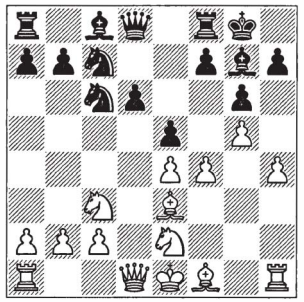
11 ♕d2!? followed by queenside castling is more principled; if 11...d5, simply 12 0-0-0.

11...e5 12 ♘de2 *(D)*

12...d5?!

The 'boomerang effect' in operation. Black knows that he has played

B



better than White in the opening, but since White starts with a slight advantage it is very difficult for Black to sense whether he is better, equal, or still slightly worse. The most dangerous situation is if Black over-estimates his position and starts to play it as though he is much better, and thus obliged to play for the attack. So it is here; Black meets White's premature flank attack with a prematurely *violent* counter-attack in the centre, while *steady* pressure against the centre, with 12...♗g4 and a well-timed ...exf4, would have given Black a comfortable game.

Napier's central thrust is tempting, and indeed pushes Lasker's position to the brink of destruction, but in the chaos that follows, Lasker shows that Black's position too has its weaknesses.

13 exd5!

In such a razor-sharp position, the only realistic possibility of mounting a successful defence is generally to head straight down the critical lines. Once the line has been crossed from normal positional play to outright chaos, it is rare for it to be possible to reach a satisfactory outcome by trying to quieten the position down. Black is

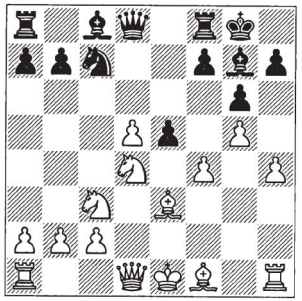
better after either 13 ♘xd5 exf4, or 13 fxe5 dxe4.

13...♘d4

Dvoretsky suggests 13...exf4!? 14 ♗xf4 ♘e5 15 ♗g2 ♘e8 followed by ...♘d6 with good play for the pawn. This might well be objectively better than the text-move, though probably not sufficiently so to justify 12...d5 instead of 12...♗g4.

14 ♘xd4 *(D)*

B



14...♘xd5!

It was not through lack of imagination that the Anglo-American master, soon to become the first official British Champion, lost this game. Indeed, Napier reckoned this loss to be his finest game of chess. He had seen, well in advance, that if now 15 ♘xd5, then 15...exd4!, when Black is better after 16 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 17 gxf6 ♖e8!.

But Lasker too has resources.

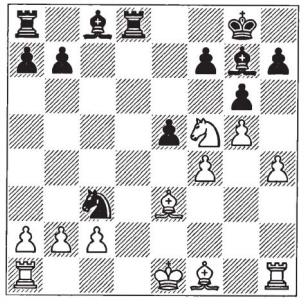
15 ♘f5!

The only square from which the knight protects the bishop on e3! The knight on d5 is now threatened, so Black's reply is forced.

15...♘xc3 16 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 *(D)*

Material is level, but each player has a knight *en prise*. The naïve 17

W



bxc3? ♗xf5 strongly favours Black, so there is no escape from the tactics just yet, even with queens off.

17 ♘e7+!

A critical moment. This in fact was Lasker's last chance to make a safe exit from the white-knuckle ride, by playing 17 ♘xg7!?, but the line offers no more than a draw, except in one very easily missed line. Lasker, with nerves of steel, decides that he can legitimately play for more.

After 17 ♘xg7 ♘d5! 18 ♗d2 (18 0-0-0? ♗g4 ∓ is as far as Dvoretsky analyses), the splendidly calm move 18...exf4! leaves the knight on g7 trapped; Black hopes to emerge a pawn ahead. White may try:

1) 19 0-0-0?! (the only move analysed by Nunn in this position) 19...♗g4 20 ♗g2 ♗xd1 21 ♖xd1 ♘e3 ∓, Nunn.

2) 19 ♗c4!? ♔xg7 (19...♘e3?! 20 ♗xe3 fxe3 21 0-0) 20 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 21 0-0-0 ♗e6 (21...♗g4?? 22 ♗c3+) 22 ♗xf4 and the complications subside to an ending with level material and opposite-coloured bishops. Although this sounds drawish, White will be able to test Black's defensive resources by trying to exploit the very

weak dark squares around the black king. White is slightly better, but Black with care should not lose.

3) 19 c4! ♘e3, and now:

3a) 20 ♗c3? ♘c2+ 21 ♔f2 ♘xa1 22 h5!? (White is the exchange down, and cannot prevent the black knight from escaping, so tries to create mating threats; if 22 ♗f6!? Black simply plays 22...♗g4!) 22...♘c2! (surprisingly, this knight is essential for Black's kingside defence) 23 hxg6 fxg6 24 c5 ♘e3 and Black successfully keeps his extra material.

3b) 20 ♗a5!! b6 (20...♖f8 21 ♗c3 ♘c2+ 22 ♔d2 ♘xa1 23 ♗d3, and White stays ahead in material) 21 ♗c3 ♘c2+ (21...♗b7 22 ♖h2) 22 ♔f2 ♗b7 (22...♘xa1 23 ♗g2! should win for White, revealing the point behind the *zwischenzug* 20 ♗a5!!) 23 ♗g2 ♗xg2 24 ♔xg2 ♘xa1 25 ♖xa1 gives White excellent winning chances. Material is nominally roughly even (♗+♘ vs ♖+♙), and while the knight on g7 obviously has no available squares, the horse is safe. Black's problem is that his king is seriously exposed to back-rank checks, and also possible ♘e8-f6 manoeuvres, which severely limits the scope of his rooks. If, for example, 25...♖ac8, then 26 ♖e1! ♖xc4 27 ♘e8 f3+ 28 ♔g3 (not allowing ...♖xh4) 28...♔f8 29 ♘f6, and White is clearly much better, even though it would be premature to claim this as an outright win.

This last line (20 ♗a5!!) derives from an editorial suggestion by Burgess, though naturally the author would like to take credit for being the first to suggest that the simple and straightforward 17 ♘xg7 needs to be taken seriously! Some interesting methodological questions are also raised. No one could really claim that 17 ♘xg7 (♘x♗) is in any sense a surprise move, unlike, for example, Nunn's 20...♘e4! in the main text. The fact that the simple capture on g7 has hitherto (to the best of the author's knowledge) not been examined properly must therefore be because a long line of annotators, stretching over nearly a century, have just not wanted the simple move to be good. This game, after all, is the supreme example of Lasker's tactical magic, and in such a case, who would really want to be the first to say that Lasker could have achieved much more with humdrum moves? Yes, there is a genuine sense of sadness here, but also there is something to be learnt about chess too.

Another point that needs to be made is that (even if we forget about the researches of earlier generations), if Dvoretsky and Nunn both miss something important, if Crouch points out what has been missed, and if Burgess points out an important nuance that Crouch had missed, then it is to be readily appreciated that in any genuinely complicated game of chess, it is incredibly difficult for any single annotator to approach the truth straight away. But would we want things any other way?

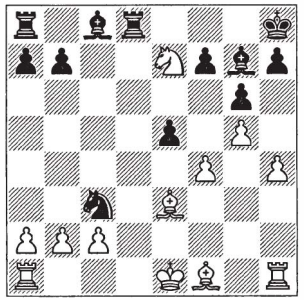
17...♔h8! *(D)*

Black continues to show excellent composure in defence. He abandons the pursuit of the white horse with 17...♔f8, in view of 18 ♗c5 ♘e4 (18...♘a4 19 ♗a3 ♔e8 20 ♘xc8 followed by ♗b5+) 19 ♗a3 ♘d6 (White wins after 19...♔e8 20 ♘xc8 ♖dxc8

21 ♗b5+ ♔d8 22 0-0-0+ ♔c7 23 ♖he1) 20 ♘xc8 ♖axc8 21 0-0-0 ♔e7 (21...♖c6 22 ♖d5 exf4 23 ♗b5 ♖b6 24 ♖hd1 ♔e7 25 ♖e1+ ♔f8 26 ♗xd6+ ♖bxd6 27 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 28 ♖e8#) 22 ♗h3 ♖c6 23 ♖he1 with decisive pins.

It is of course some sort of victory for White that he has extricated his knight from danger, while Black's is still under attack. However, winning this skirmish does not necessarily mean that the game as a whole will go in his favour. The position is still very open, and both kings are about to become exposed to attack.

W



18 h5

"For open positions of this type, Lasker had the highest possible understanding" – Réti. The flurry of complications over the last few moves has not given Lasker time to proceed with his kingside pawn attack, but as soon as there is a moment's lull in the play (here caused by the fact that Black is no longer threatening the white knight), he reactivates his earlier plan.

Lasker is merely playing the natural move, given that 18 bxc3 exf4 19 ♗d4 ♗xd4 (19...♖e8!?, Nunn, with the idea of 20 ♗f6 ♖xe7+ 21 ♗xe7 ♗xc3+ 22 ♔f2 ♗xa1, but maybe 23 ♗c4 keeps the position messy) 20 cxd4 ♖e8 21 0-0-0 ♖xe7 22 d5 ♗d7 is good for Black, while 18 ♘xc8 exf4 leaves the white king exposed.

When shown this position by Dvoretsky, Lautier suggested 18 f5!?, preventing the violent opening of the long diagonal. The piece sacrifice with 18...gxf5 19 bxc3 f4 (or 19...♗e6 20 ♗h3 inserted first) 20 ♗f2 does not appear to be quite sound, so attention turns to 18...♘e4 19 f6 ♗f8 20 ♗c4, and now Dvoretsky gives 20...♘d6 21 ♗b3 ±. The knight is awkwardly placed on d6, since a later ♗c5 hit will be possible, so Black should perhaps consider 20...♗xe7 21 fxe7 ♖e8, with a slight advantage to White, but nothing special. 18 h5 still seems White's most dangerous try.

18...♖e8

Mating threats are in the air. Black has no time for 18...exf4? 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 ♘xg6+ ♔g8 21 ♗c4+ ♘d5 22 ♗xd5+ ♖xd5 23 ♘e7+.

19 ♗c5 gxh5 *(D)*

Perhaps a slightly strange choice at first sight, but showing good defensive sense. However Black plays, his kingside pawn-structure is going to be damaged, and White will have an opportunity to attack with his rook along the h-file. Black must try to minimize this damage, and here he sees the priority as being to maintain the pawn on f7, to provide extra cover for the g6-square, and to maintain at least a temporary block on the a2-g8 diagonal.

19...exf4!? is an interesting alternative, relying on the pin on the knight to slow down White's mating attack. It is frustrating for White that there is no straightforward way to walk out of the pin with his king, since 0-0-0 is illegal, and either ♔d2 or ♔f2 would be met by the knight fork ...♘e4+. White has a choice:

1) 20 bxc3?! ♖xe7+! 21 ♗xe7 ♗xc3+ 22 ♔f2 ♗xa1 23 ♗c4 ♗d4+ 24 ♔f3 ♗f5! ∓ – Marco.

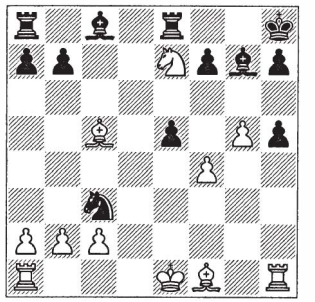
2) 20 hxg6!? fxg6 21 ♗c4 and now Dvoretsky's suggestion 21...b6! transposes to '3' below. This improves on the older idea 21...b5 22 ♗f7 ♗b7 23 ♖h2 (or 23 ♖h4) 23...♘d5 24 ♗xe8 ♖xe8 25 0-0-0 ♘xe7 26 ♖d7, when White should win after a few complications.

3) 20 ♗c4!? has been largely ignored, at least until Dvoretsky started asking colleagues for analytical suggestions. White's idea is to take a pawn on f7 *before* capturing on g6, so that the h-pawn cannot be recaptured on g6. 20...gxh5 transposes to the game, but without giving Black the chance to play Nunn's improvement (see note to 20...exf4), while 20...b5 (by analogy with '2') fails miserably to 21 ♗xf7 ♗b7 22 ♖h2 ♘d5 23 hxg6. Neither does 20...♘e4 work in view of 21 ♗xf7 ♗g4 22 ♘xg6+ hxg6 23 hxg6+. Dvoretsky credits Dolmatov with the far from obvious reply 20...b6!!, analysing 21 ♗xf7 ♗b7 22 ♔f2 ♘e4+!, and 21 hxg6 fxg6, the critical line then being noted as 22 bxc3 ♗xc3+! 23 ♔f2 bxc5 ∓. 22 ♔f1 still leaves Black with everything to prove, since 23 ♘xg6# is threatened, and 22...♖xe7 23 ♗xe7 ♗b7 24 ♖h3 should allow White to consolidate.

20 ♗c4?

This has been given the double exclamation mark in several sources, but

W



in view of the bombshell suggested by Nunn (20...♘e4!), a question mark is more appropriate.

20 bxc3 has often been suggested, with the verdict after 20...♗f8 21 ♗b5 ♖xe7 22 ♗xe7 ♗xe7 ranging from favourable to Black (Réti), through equal but unclear (Marco) to favourable to White (Nunn, who adds the further moves 23 ♖xh5 ♗g4 24 ♖h4 ♗f5; also Dvoretsky). Although White is the exchange up, his whole pawn-structure is under fire, and Black's pieces, including an active bishop-pair, cooperate well. Black has excellent defensive chances.

A more puzzling question, which seems to have been ignored, is why Lasker did not recapture with 20 ♖xh5!?, placing immediate pressure on h7, keeping the capture on c3 hanging over Black, and maintaining options of developing the bishop to either b5, c4 or d3, according to Black's choice of reply. What appeared to have been an interesting diversion when I wrote my first set of notes is now to be seen as crucial to the evaluation of White's 17 ♘e7+ idea. We consider first the minor choices before examining the main line with 20...♘e4.

1) 20...exf4? 21 ♗d3 runs straight into Black's main problem, the indefensibility of h7 in many lines. If 21...h6, then 22 ♔d2 and Black's position soon collapses.

2) 20...♗f8 21 g6 fxg6 (21...♗xe7 22 ♖xh7+ ♔g8 23 gxf7+ ♔xh7 24 fxe8♕ +–) 22 ♘xg6+ (22 ♖xe5 ♗xe7! 23 ♗xe7 ♘d5 ±) 22...♔g7! 23 ♗xf8+ (remarkably, 23 ♘xf8 exf4+ leaves White no clean escape from the check) 23...♔xg6 24 ♖g5+ ♔f7 25 ♖xe5 ♖xe5+ 26 fxe5 ♔xf8 27 bxc3 ±.

3) 20...e4 21 ♗c4 ♗e6 22 ♗xe6 fxe6 23 ♔f2! (23 g6 h6 24 bxc3 ♗xc3+ 25 ♔e2 ♖xe7! is unclear) with decisive threats.

4) 20...b6 21 ♗d6 ♘e4 22 ♗d3 ♗b7 and now White should play 23 0-0-0 ± (rather than 23 fxe5?! ♗f8!).

5) 20...♗g4 21 ♖h4 h5 22 gxh6 ♗f6 23 ♖xg4 ♘e4 24 fxe5 +–.

6) 20...♘e4!:

6a) 21 ♗b5? ♗g4! (suggested by Nunn during the editing process).

6b) 21 ♖xh7+? ♔xh7 22 ♗d3 is a spectacular try, but Black defends as in '6d' with 22...♗f5!, and if 23 0-0-0, then 23...♖xe7 –+.

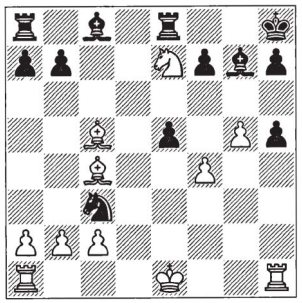
6c) 21 g6?! fxg6 22 ♘xg6+ ♔g8 23 ♘e7+ ♔f7 24 ♗c4+ ♗e6 25 ♖f5+? (25 ♗xe6+ ♔xe6 26 ♗a3 keeps drawing chances for White) 25...♗f6 and it turns out that White's pieces are more heavily overloaded than Black's.

6d) 21 ♗d3 ♗f5! 22 ♘xf5 ♘xc5 and Black's defensive resources at first seem adequate; for example, 23 0-0-0 ♘xd3+ 24 ♖xd3 exf4 25 ♖dh3 h6!, and Black can hold after either 26 gxh6 ♗e5 or 26 ♘xh6 ♗xh6 27 ♖xh6+ ♔g7. Forcing an opponent to block a critical open file with his own pawn is a defensive trick worth knowing. The way Black forced White to block the b1-h7 diagonal is also noteworthy. The analysts have still not yet exhausted the possibilities of this remarkable game, and I am sure that fresh ideas may still be found. If there is a win after 20 ♖xh5 (and undoubtedly Lasker was chasing the win), it is certainly very deeply hidden. But if the outright win is not there, is there some way in which Lasker could at least have secured a positional advantage? The best chance, perhaps, is in this line, where White may try 23 ♗b5!. If Black moves his rook away, White will have time to unite his rooks and crash through on h7. This suggests that Black could try the exchange sacrifice 23...exf4+ 24 ♗xe8 ♖xe8+ 25 ♔f1 ♗xb2. White is better; I leave it to others to decide whether there is an outright win.

It is interesting to note that even the recent analyses of Dvoretsky and Nunn have failed to consider this obvious recapture.

We return to the position after 20 ♗c4 *(D)*:

B



20...exf4?

This natural move, winning a pawn, pinning the white knight, and tactically defending his own knight, has passed without challenge for almost a century. The conscientious annotator will already have a spinning head from the complexity of the previous play, and will be all too glad that somewhere in the game there is an 'easy' move that does not seem to demand heavy analysis (that's my excuse, and I'm sticking to it!), while the lazy annotator will merely be reworking someone else's notes anyway. Such a principle may help explain why so many previous annotators have glossed over critical points at earlier stages of the game.

It has only been very recently, in *The Mammoth Book of the World's Greatest Chess Games* (Burgess, Nunn, Emms) that the first serious challenge seems to have been made to what has always appeared to be Lasker's faultless handling of the complications. Nunn pointed out that after 20...♘e4! 21 ♗xf7 ♗g4! 22 ♗xe8 ♖xe8 23 ♗a3 ♘g3 (or maybe 23...exf4 24 0-0 ♘xg5) 24 ♖h2 exf4, Black has massive compensation for the exchange. It is difficult to see White surviving for long, given the total lack of coordination of his pieces. It is of course possible that someone else had discovered 20...♘e4! at an earlier date, but chess literature is so scattered among various books, magazines and newspapers in such a bewildering variety of languages that it is almost impossible to check up on this point. At any rate, the move has escaped all the standard sources, and Nunn deserves credit for bringing it to general attention.

In trying to hold tactically charged positions, vigorous defence is usually best, and can quite often lead to a complete turn-around in the position. Passive defence with 20...♗e6? would not have worked: 21 ♗xe6 fxe6 22 bxc3 ♗f8 23 ♗d6 (this is better than Réti's suggestion of 23 ♖xh5) 23...♗xe7 (23...exf4 24 ♗e5+ ♗g7 25 ♗f6 lasts longer, but White should still win) 24 ♗xe5+ and White wins easily.

21 ♗xf7! *(D)*

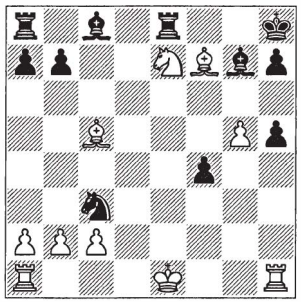
Again showing Lasker's complete willingness to enter a thicket of complications if he feels that this is the best way of handling the position. At first one might think that this is a good opportunity to remove the knight with 21 bxc3, but after 21...♗xc3+ 22 ♔f2 ♗xa1 23 ♖xa1, Black defends with 23...♔g7!, preparing to run to f8 in the event of ♗d4+. If White plays 24 ♖e1, then 24...♗g4, and White has no obvious breakthrough. The pawns that Black has picked up along the way are important, as otherwise he would be material down. 23 ♗xf7 (instead of 23 ♖xa1) is another try in this line, but it is not so clear whether White can force anything after 23...♖f8!, and if 24 g6, then 24...♗g7 25 ♖xh5 h6. 24 ♖xa1 ♖xf7 25 ♗d4+ ♖g7 is another possibility, but there does not seem to be any way to exploit the pin. If he has to content himself with regaining the exchange, the pawn-count is against him.

Napier notes that by this stage, Lasker was in extreme time-trouble, with three minutes to reach move 30.

21...♘e4!?

"This rook sacrifice is a stroke of genius; it is Napier's best chance and against a less astute tactician might

B



perhaps even have won the game" – Réti.

Nunn dissents, and suggests that 21...♖f8 would have drawn after 22 ♗xh5 ♘e4 23 ♘g6+ ♔g8 (23...hxg6 24 ♗xg6+ ♔g8 25 ♗xf8 ♗xb2 26 ♗xe4 ♗xa1 27 ♗d6 ± Nunn) 24 ♘e7+ ♔h8 25 ♘g6+, etc. Simply 22 g6! looks very strong, and indeed decisive after 22...♘e4 23 ♖xh5. 22...♗g4!? 23 bxc3 ♗xc3+ 24 ♔f2 ♖xf7 25 gxf7 ♗xa1 26 ♖xa1 ♔g7 leaves White with an endgame a piece for a few isolated pawns up. He should probably win, though Black should be able to create considerable technical difficulties.

In an attempt to salvage his analysis, Nunn later claimed that Black has an 'instant draw' in the last line after 24...b6 instead of 24...♖xf7, citing the line 25 ♗a3 ♗d4+ 26 ♔g2 f3+ 27 ♔g3 ♗e5+. I suspect that not many other grandmasters would be happy with a draw as White in such a position. It is true that Black escapes after 25 ♗d6 ♖ad8 26 ♗xf4 ♗xa1 27 ♖xa1 hxg6! 28 ♘xg6+ ♔g7 29 ♘xf8 ♖xf8, when White loses a piece on the f-file. White can improve with 25 ♖ag1!, and if 25...bxc5, then 26 ♖xg4 ♗d4+ 27 ♔f1 ♖xf7 28 gxf7 hxg4 29 f8♕+ ♖xf8 30 ♘g6+ ♔g7 31 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 32 ♖xh7 and White wins the endgame. The black pawns are not as fearsome as they look; for example, 32...f3?! 33 ♖h4 g3 34 ♖f4+.

22 ♗xe8 ♗xb2 23 ♖b1 ♗c3+ 24 ♔f1 ♗g4?! *(D)*

Black is a long way behind in material (two pawns for the rook), but has three different moves by the knight, each of which would recover most of the deficit. None of the alternatives is quite satisfactory however, since the game becomes simplified, and Black loses his dangerous counter-attack, while it will not be difficult for White to pick up the odd pawn, regaining his material advantage. Napier's reply immediately brings his last two pieces into play, takes an important flight-square from the white king, and threatens a fourth (!) piece, the bishop on e8. Lasker had presumably seen this position in advance, and plotted his escape route, before playing 21 ♗xf7, since the last few moves have been more or less forced, and if Lasker was worried about his position he could safely have played 21 bxc3.

Let us consider Black's alternatives:

1) 24...♘g3+? is the least convincing. After 25 ♔g2 ♘xh1 26 ♖xh1 White is a piece for two pawns up, and all his remaining pieces are actively placed. If Black wants to win back an exchange, at least he should keep the remaining rook out of active play. Which implies ...

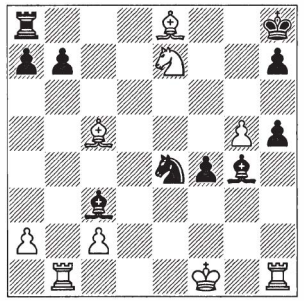
2) 24...♘d2+?! 25 ♔e2 (strangely, allowing a bishop check with gain of tempo seems to be the clearest way; White's next move gains a tempo too) 25...♗g4+ 26 ♔d3 ♘xb1 27 ♖xb1 and White stays a piece up, though Black may resist for a long time with 27...♗g7.

3) 24...♘xc5! is Black's best defence; in many ways the bishops are more dangerous enemies than the rooks. If 25 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 26 ♗xh5 ♔g7 Black has a pawn for the exchange, well-placed pieces, and the better pawn-structure. His chances to hold are thus very good. Or 25 ♘d5 ♗f5 26 ♗xh5 ♗e5, and whether there is a win or not for White (probably not), it is far from straightforward. Nunn gives 25 ♗xh5 ♘e4 26 ♔g2 ♘g3 27 ♗g6 ♘xh1 28 ♖xh1 as an outright win for White, but Black's long-winded knight manoeuvre must surely be regarded as misguided when he still has a rook and bishop yet to be brought into play. 25...♗e6! is much better, and if 26 g6, then not 26...♗f6? 27 ♗g4! (Burgess), but perhaps simply 26...h6!, with continued unclear play. On other moves, Black is ready to attack with ...♖d8, or defend with a later ...♘xg5. Nunn in an editorial comment gives 26 ♗g6 as an instant win, but Black still requires subduing after 26...♔g7 27 ♖xh7+ ♔f8. His king is exposed and he is the exchange down, but his bishop-pair cooperates well, both in attack (White's king is also exposed, and the f-pawn could become dangerous) and in defence (f7, g8, g7 and h8 are all covered). Maybe White can with accurate play win, but it is difficult. Black is putting up more resistance than in the game.

It is best to try to play with *all* your pieces working together, rather than using just one piece.

Both players have played superbly so far. Some of the moves have admittedly been inaccurate, but this involves no real discredit to either player, given the sheer complexity of the play. After all, it has taken almost a century for analysis to emerge to question the play, and much of the existing analysis is itself open to question. Lasker and Napier had to make their moves under normal tournament time limits, a far more difficult prospect! Napier's move turns out to be the mistake that decides the game, although Lasker has to find a brilliancy to prove it.

W



25 ♗xh5!

Aesthetically, one of the most enjoyable aspects of this game is the symmetry of all the piece sacrifices each player makes – or tries to make. Earlier on, both players were eagerly plunging their knights onto unprotected squares (and both these knights have, almost miraculously, survived), while if White had tried 20 ♖xh5!, each player would have been merrily sacrificing bishops. Now it is the turn of the rooks. Black has sacrificed a rook; White in turn sacrifices a rook, and gains some welcome simplification.

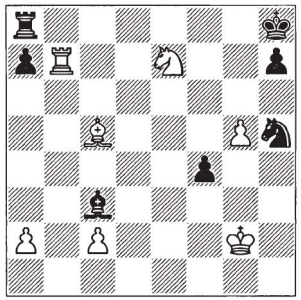
Instead, 25 ♗b5? ♘xc5 would have given Black the better game; this is maybe what Napier was reckoning on.

What of the technical questions behind the aesthetics? Why have *both* players been so willing to make sacrifices? A sacrifice is made only if the player making the sacrifice achieves something in return, which will generally be in terms either of a gain of time, maybe even a single vital tempo, or maybe in terms of some form of destruction of the opponent's position. Either type of sacrifice may be seen in attacking or defensive forms. The attacking form of a destructive sacrifice might, for example, involve cracking open the opposing king's protective pawn-cover. The defensive form is more likely to have as its objective the simplification of the position. This is precisely the case with Lasker's rook sacrifice here. White sacrifices a whole rook – that is the first impression. More precisely, White gives up rook and bishop in return for bishop and pawn – and the bishop that White picks up is one that is starting to constrict White's position severely. In order to win the sacrificed rook, Black will have to move his knight completely out of position, and this knight has proven in several variations to be a most dangerous piece. White, in return for his sacrifice, neutralizes two critical minor pieces, and takes over the initiative himself. Since Black's earlier initiative was easily worth a rook, this is a bargain for White.

Earlier on, there have been several points where each player has been forced to sacrifice (even though the opponent has not necessarily been forced to accept), in order to wrest the initiative from the opponent. The attempt to have done anything else would have broken the rule 'thou shalt not flinch', and would usually have been punished by rapid defeat. Despite the sacrifices, the differences in material between the sides has rarely been great; even Black's rook sacrifice was made on the basis that most of the material would be won back by force. Some of the most complicated and unstable positions in the game or in the notes have been with level material (perhaps give or take a pawn). This makes the dynamics very different from a game in which just one of the players sacrifices heavily to begin with, and the defender has to find ways to sacrifice to save his position, and maybe win the game. In this game, the roles of attacker and defender have alternated disconcertingly throughout; one cannot go much further than to say that the attacker is the one who has sacrificed last.

25...♗xh5 26 ♖xh5 ♘g3+ 27 ♔g2 ♘xh5 28 ♖xb7 *(D)*

B



In chess, dead pieces are removed from the game, allowing the usual

analogies from the second law of thermodynamics. A game may burst into extreme complications as pieces take up their positions of maximum power, but it is impossible to continue to make the game more complicated in perpetuity. Each sacrifice made means that material is removed from the board, and, however much it may complicate the position initially, it takes the position a step closer to an endgame. In the earlier notes, many complicated variations suddenly subside to an endgame. This is a normal process, of which both attacker and defender need to be aware.

Here the endgame is in White's favour, despite the level material. All White's pieces are working together effectively, while Black's are uncoordinated – and there is no longer any likelihood that there will be a saving defensive sacrifice.

Tarrasch once joked, or half-joked, that Lasker played 1 e4 with a view to the endgame. He was more than useful at handling the intervening complications. It is only with masses of hindsight that one can suggest that Lasker should have played more simply.

28...a5

Black can hardly hope to survive if he allows White a well-guarded outside passed a-pawn.

29 ♖b3

A change of tack, forcing the bishop to a worse square, and creating space for the passed c-pawn.

29...♗g7

Entombing the king, but the alternatives are horrible: 29...♗b4 30 ♗d4+, 29...♗a1 30 c3, or 29...♗e5 30 ♖h3 ♘g3 31 ♘g6+ winning the bishop.

30 ♖h3 ♘g3 31 ♔f3 ♖a6

The pawn cannot be saved; for example, 31...♗e5? 32 ♘g6+. Nunn suggests that 31...♖e8 32 ♗d6 ♘f1 33 ♔xf4 offers a little more resistance.

32 ♔xf4 ♘e2+ 33 ♔f5 ♘c3 34 a3 ♘a4

What else? Black is alarmingly short of purposeful moves. This endgame is decided by piece attack rather than by pawn-play.

35 ♗e3 1-0

There are several winning plans available for White. A kingside attack with g6 is always a possibility, and he can also think about using his rook or advancing his c-pawn.

If you think this game was unusually complicated, just try the next one!

Game L5
Schlechter – Lasker
Berlin Wch (7) 1910
Sicilian Dragon

The seventh game of Lasker's match against Schlechter must count as one of the most intense battles in the history of chess, but is far less well known than the Napier game, probably because the drawn outcome prejudiced the anthologists against it. This collection does not despise draws, and the

reader's attention is directed to the way in which *both* players combine forceful attack and resourceful defence in the midst of almighty complications. Although eight out of the ten games in the match were drawn, most of the draws were hard-fought and exciting games, in which both players defended with great resourcefulness, but were perhaps less confident in handling the attack. Schlechter won the fifth game by defending excellently and finding tricks in what looked like a lost position, and now Lasker was trying everything he possibly could to level the match scores by game ten.

The game of chess has advanced a lot in the last hundred years, but the match between Lasker and Schlechter must still count as one of the great classic encounters in chess history. One can only regret that the planned match between Lasker and Rubinstein never took place; judging by their games at St Petersburg 1909 (a classic win by Rubinstein) and St Petersburg 1914 (stylish revenge by Lasker) this might have been an even more absorbing encounter. There are so many might-have-beens in chess to regret, but we must not forget to celebrate the games that actually took place.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6

A long time had passed since Lasker had tried the immediate 4...g6 against Schlechter, at Hastings 1895. Play continued 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 ♕d4 f6 7 ♗c4 e6 8 0-0 ♘h6 9 ♘c3 ♘f7 10 ♗e3 ♗g7 11 ♖ad1 0-0 12 ♕d2 f5, and now instead of the anti-positional 13 exf5?, which allowed Lasker to build a massive pawn-centre, Schlechter should have tried 13 ♗d4 ± (Crouch and Haines, *Hastings 1895*).

The line of play that Lasker chooses here is no less risky, but at least it takes Schlechter on to new ground.

5 ♘c3 g6

The standard way of reaching the Dragon in this move-order is with 5...d6, which prevents the plan of 6 ♘xc6 followed by e5. The Richter-Rauzer Attack with 6 ♗g5 forces Black to find something else. Neither Richter nor Rauzer was active in 1910 though.

6 ♗c4!?

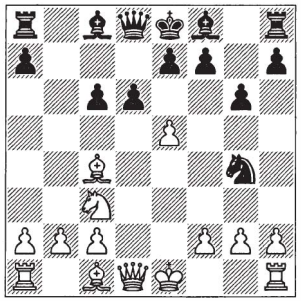
After this perfectly natural move, we are already outside *ECO*, which gives only 6 ♘xc6 and 6 f4 or, after 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♗c4, only 6...♗g7.

After 6 ♘xc6 dxc6, contemporary annotators (cited in Goldman, *Schlechter!*) gave 7 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 8 ♗c4 ♔e8 9 e5 ♘g4 10 f4 with advantage to White. There seems no reason to doubt this general assessment, though the pawn sacrifice 8...♗g7!? might be interesting. This leaves 6...bxc6 7 e5 ♘g8 8 ♗c4, and Bilguer, the main reference work of the time, gave 8...d5 9 exd6 exd6 10 ♕f3 d5 11 ♘xd5!. Lasker's disciple of a couple of generations later, Korchnoi, has tried 8...♗g7 9 ♕f3 f5 10 ♗f4 e6 11 g4 fxg4 12 ♕xg4 ♕a5 13 0-0-0 ♗xe5, when Black hopes to grab the pawn and defend, Suetin-Korchnoi, USSR 1954. Who is to say that Lasker would not have tried something similar?

6...d6 7 ♘xc6 bxc6 8 e5 ♘g4 *(D)*

Not 8...dxe5?? 9 ♗xf7+.

W



9 e6!?

The defining moment of the game, which revolves around the question of whether this pawn is strong or weak. Schlechter had the slightly unjustified reputation of being an unambitious player, content merely to play steady technical chess and keep the draw in hand. This is perhaps unfair, as he was a player with a highly developed sense of the aesthetics of the game, and could play superb initiative chess when required. Often though, particularly in his early days, Schlechter was liable to agree premature draws in precisely the sort of position in which the dry technician would be eagerly gearing up to grind away.

Schlechter himself admits that his aggressive and uncompromising move was risky. The safer, more technical option, advocated, for example, by Capablanca, would be 9 exd6 ♕xd6 10 ♕xd6 exd6 11 0-0. It looks good, and Capablanca the supreme technician, certainly knew a thing or two about exploiting split pawns. Lasker too was an excellent endgame player with a fine grasp of queenless middlegames, and he knew how to resist in apparently ugly positions. He was presumably happy to play this position.

Given a routine move, say 11...♗g7, White will be able to press for advantage along the e-file with 12 ♖e1+, with his control of the a2-g8 diagonal providing extra possibilities. White's initiative may be nullified by one good move to the focal point of these two lines: 11...♗e6!, and if 12 ♖e1, then 12...♔d7!. A bishop exchange on e6 would transform Black's central pawn-structure, giving three connected and uncompromised central pawns rather than an inflexible hanging pawn couple; the bigger the pawn island, the better. Play might continue instead 13 ♗b3 ♗g7, but Black is then close to equality.

Black should avoid the temptation in this line of chasing the bishop with 11...d5?! 12 ♗b3. The relief from White's pressure would be only temporary, and the pawns will become difficult to advance safely, while Black's control of the dark squares will have been substantially weakened. A later c4 could prove embarrassing. But Lasker knew full well that unnecessary pawn moves in defence should be avoided.

9...f5 10 0-0

White relies on the tactical trick 10...d5? 11 ♘xd5! to give himself time to protect the e-pawn.

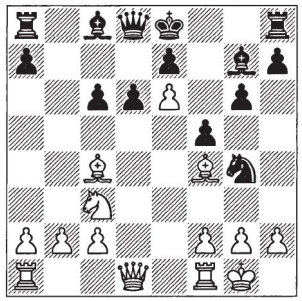
10...♗g7 11 ♗f4 *(D)*

More tactical tricks. Now Black must avoid 11...d5? 12 ♘xd5 cxd5 13 ♗xd5 ♗a6 14 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 15 ♕d7+, and also 11...0-0? 12 ♗xd6.

11...♕b6

The advanced pawn on e6 is of course a considerable irritation for

B



Black. He has two basic choices of defensive plan, each of which carries a different type of risk. He can play to win the pawn with 11...♗xc3 12 bxc3 d5, after which his piece coordination is poor, though without White having any obvious plan of attack. Or he can play *around* the pawn, concentrating on getting all his pieces developed, and making use of the central squares behind White's pawn, but taking the risk that while the pawn survives, White has considerable scope for tactical play. Here Lasker aims for piece-play rather than for gain of material – and characteristically goes down the path of greatest complication.

After 11...♗xc3 12 bxc3 d5, Bachman (cited in *Schlechter!*, Goldman) gives 13 ♗e2 ♘f6 14 ♗h6 ♗xe6 15 ♖e1 with more than enough for the pawn. Whether or not one agrees with this assessment, 13 ♗e2 looks strange in that it puts the bishop on a poor square in order to drive the knight from a square it wants to leave anyway. 13 ♗b3! ♗xe6 14 ♕e2 makes more sense; White places his rooks and queen on the central files, angles for a c4 break, and plays h3 followed by ♗e5 as soon as Black starts to show an interest in playing ...e5. Lasker has no wish to defend such a lifeless position for the sake of a pawn, even a central pawn.

12 ♗b3 ♗a6 13 ♘a4 ♕d4

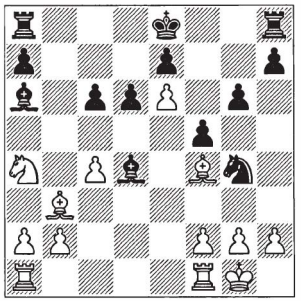
It must be forwards, not backwards! Black's pieces will be totally ineffective if they have to hide behind pawns on the second and third ranks.

14 ♕xd4

14 ♕f3 ♕e4 15 ♕xe4 fxe4 16 ♖fe1 ♗d4 17 ♗g3 e3 ∓, Tarrasch (cited by Goldman).

14...♗xd4 15 c4 *(D)*

B



15...0-0

There are many who, looking at the diagram position, would have preferred to snatch the pawn with 11...♗xc3 and then hope for the best. The pawn on e6 is clearly not going to drop, and so long as it remains on the board, it is a real nuisance for Black.

Bernstein suggests that Black's king is awkwardly placed after castling. Possibly so, but the defender cannot have everything his own way. It is difficult to agree with him that 15...♗e5 16 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 improves. When maintaining piece activity is at such a high premium, it is not a good bargain for Black to exchange his active bishop for White's passive one. White plays 17 ♖ac1, and if 17...d5?!, then 18 ♘c5! ♗xc4 (18...dxc4 loses to 19 ♘xa6) 19 ♖fe1 ♘d3 (19...♗xb3? 20 ♖xe5 and then 20...♗xa2 21 b3, or 20...♗c4 21 b3, would leave the bishop without an escape route) 20 ♘xd3 ♗xd3 21 ♖xc6 and Black starts to suffocate. If Black avoids this, White consolidates with a clear positional edge.

15...c5!? is an important alternative. Judging by the citations in Goldman's book, this appears to have been ignored by the analysts, but there has been much more coverage of 15...0-0 16 ♖ad1 c5, when White is a move closer to an exchange sacrifice on d4 (see the note to Black's 16th move). It is strange that the natural pawn-push to protect the bishop is considered only when the bishop is directly attacked, and not as a prophylactic measure.

If 15...c5 is met by 16 ♖ad1!?, Black does not bother with castling, but moves straight over to the attack with 16...g5!, and if 17 ♗xg5? (17 ♗c1 f4 ∓), then 17...♖g8 followed by ...♗b7, when explosions follow in the vicinity of the white king. 16 ♘c3 is critical, when Black can hardly allow the knight to reach d5; therefore 16...♗xc3. If 17 ♗a4+, then 17...♔f8 18 bxc3 ♗xc4 19 ♖fe1 ♔g7, and while White has compensation for the pawn, it is unlikely that he is better. If 17 bxc3, the safest is probably 17...0-0 followed by ...♘f6.

Lasker seems to be very consciously defending in 'Steinitzian' style, conspicuously avoiding any pawn moves which might later create weaknesses. The problem with such an approach is that it does not eliminate the possibility of White playing c5 at some later stage, with a direct tactical assault on Black's pawn defences. This illustrates a common dilemma in defensive play: should one make a slight positional concession in order to ward off tactical dangers? Or should one play the positionally strictly logical move, and rely on the natural power of the defence to beat off any tactically driven attack? Sometimes it takes considerable tactical self-confidence to play the positionally logical move! We must remember though that Lasker was behind in the match, with only four games with which to catch up, and that he desperately needed a win. He had to take controlled risks. After my initial scepticism while annotating, I now feel that Lasker's choice was indeed the best. A victory for the Steinitz principles?

16 ♖ad1

"The game was adjourned at this point and play resumed on Feb. 1" (two days later) – Goldman. This seems extraordinarily leisurely, even by *belle époque* standards. The match conditions as stated by Goldman a few pages earlier allowed for an afternoon session, then a dinner break, then an evening session, with a total of six hours (allowing for 45 moves per player) per day. One wonders whether slightly different conditions applied that day.

Chess was a much younger discipline in those days, and its top-level exponents were pioneers rather than researchers. Lasker was deeply conscious of the role of world championship events in developing new ideas,

and was insistent on a pace of play which allowed for mature consideration of everything that was happening on the board. Nowadays, with a century of grandmaster chess behind us, it is much more reasonable to ask the players to make all their moves in one session, with a quicker time-limit as well.

16...♗f6!

If 16...c5, W.Heidenfeld gives 17 h3. Then:

1) 17..♘f6?! 18 ♖xd4 cxd4 19 ♖d1 ♗c8 (19...♖fc8 20 ♖xd4 ±) 20 c5 dxc5 (20...d5 21 ♖e1 ±) 21 ♘xc5 ♖d8 and now his line ended 22 ♘d7 "±", but it is not clear how White meets the simple 22...♗xd7 23 exd7+ ♔g7. 22 ♗c7! (Burgess) improves, when White will remain a pawn up, but with technical difficulties, after 22...♖d6 23 ♗xd6 exd6 24 e7+ ♔g7 25 ♘a4.

2) 17...♘e5 18 ♖xd4 cxd4 19 ♗xe5 dxe5 20 ♘c5 ♗c8 21 ♘d7 ♗xd7 22 exd7, and now Heidenfeld gives the feeble 22...♖fd8? 23 c5+ ±, but there seems absolutely no reason why Black should not neutralize the pawns with 22...♔f7 23 c5+ e6 24 c6 ♔e7.

The premature sacrifice is one of the best ways known to man of ruining a good position.

Maybe White should be satisfied with Capablanca's suggestion of 17 ♘c3 ♗xc3 18 bxc3 ♔g7 19 ♖fe1, which he gives as slightly better for White. Lasker was careful to avoid this type of possibility a move earlier; he wanted to keep the tension, and did not want to allow Schlechter the chance to escape with an effortless draw.

Goldman suggests another try for Black: 16...♗e5 17 ♗g5 ♗f6 (White has a clear advantage after 17...♗xh2+ 18 ♔h1 ♗e5 19 ♗xe7) 18 ♗f4 ♘e5 (playing for the win! 18...♗e5 repeats) 19 ♗h6 ♗g7 with unclear play. Again it is doubtful whether Black really wants to exchange dark-squared bishops, as this reduces his control of the central squares in front of his pawns. Instead of 18 ♗f4?, White plays 18 ♗xf6! ♖xf6 19 ♖fe1 ±; if 19...♘e5, 20 c5.

17 ♖fe1 g5

The quieter 17..♔g7?! gives White time for 18 c5 d5 19 h3 with a clear advantage. The text-move leads to one of the most complicated sequences of play ever seen in a world championship match.

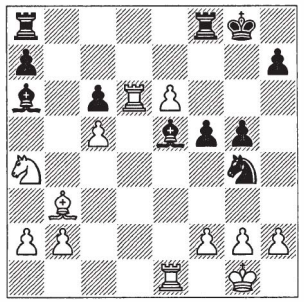
18 ♗xd6!

So Black has avoided the weakening ...c5, but now the tactics start!

18...exd6 19 ♖xd6 ♗e5 20 c5! *(D)*

The point. In return for his bishop, White gets masses of pawn-play.

B



20...♖fe8

Not surprisingly, this position carries a 'reams of analysis' health warning.

As in the celebrated Lasker-Napier game, Lasker now finds himself in a position where, in a queenless middlegame, his opponent sacrifices a piece, indeed a whole rook, in order to create attacking chances and mind-blowing complications. In the Napier game, Napier's compensation lay in having a swarm of minor pieces buzzing around Lasker's exposed king. Here, it is Schlechter's massive passed pawn, or pair of connected passed pawns if Lasker takes the rook, that provide the compensation. There is the additional complication that if Black takes the rook on d6, and then sacrifices a rook for the two connected passed pawns (thus re-establishing material parity), White is likely to be positionally better, in view of the possibility of ♘c5, in any endgame that results.

This provides good *general* grounds for Black not to want to take the rook (and Lasker, we notice, did decline White's kind offer), but specific variations need to be considered. Lasker had to analyse whether he could take the rook, before or after 20...♗xh2+. Naturally, generations of armchair analysts have had great fun with this position, but Lasker had to make a practical decision under match conditions.

1) The immediate 20...♗xd6? 21 e7+ ♔g7 22 cxd6 leaves the danger that after the rook moves, *each* of White's passed pawns will cost Black a piece (one of the pieces being a rook), leaving White material ahead. Black can cut his losses slightly, but after 22...♖fe8 23 d7 ♖ad8 24 dxe8♕ ♖xe8 25 f3 ♘f6 26 ♘c5 ♗c8 27 ♘e6+ ♗xe6 28 ♖xe6 (cited by Goldman) White reaches a winning endgame.

2) 20...♗xh2+!? 21 ♔h1 ♗xd6 is more interesting. The point is not that the h-pawn has any real significance, but rather that Black wants to lure the white king to a worse square in order to gain time to re-route his knight with a check on f2. Play continues 22 e7+ (22 cxd6 ♘xf2+ 23 ♔g1 ♘e4 24 e7+ transposes) 22...♔g7 23 cxd6 ♘xf2+ 24 ♔g1 ♘e4 25 exf8♕+ and after a relatively straightforward forcing sequence leading to a complicated endgame, the analysis now branches out alarmingly. In my first draft I added a diagram here, but in order to show the sheer complexity of the material that would need to be considered *at move 20* in order to make the very best decision, the reader is given no assistance that Lasker did not have. After the recapture of the queen, Black will be a pawn ahead, but White would still have a very dangerous d-pawn.

2a) 25...♔xf8? looks the more natural capture, bringing the king closer to the passed pawn, but there are tactical difficulties.

2a1) Not 26 ♖xe4? fxe4 27 ♘c5 ♗d3 28 ♘e6+ ♔e8 29 ♘c7+ ♔d7 30 ♘xa8 ♔xd6, when White has no defence to ...♗a6-b7, winning back the piece, and leaving Black with a probably winning endgame.

2a2) 26 d7! is a better move, and if 26..♔e7, then 27 ♘c5! (Black's knight is pinned!) 27...♗b5 28 a4 winning the bishop. A nasty little trap, not mentioned in Goldman's book, which cites several previous sources. If instead 26...♖d8 27 ♗e6, f8 is seen as a poor square for the king, as Black would rather have it on g7 to keep ...♔f6 in reserve. 26...♗b5 27 ♘c3

does not help Black's cause greatly, either.

2b) 25...♖xf8! is therefore the only correct recapture, making it more difficult for White to establish a bishop on e6.

2b1) 26 ♖xe4?! fxe4 27 ♘c5, and Black has the choice of either forcing the draw immediately with 27...♖f1+ 28 ♔h2 e3 29 d7 e2 30 d8♕ ♖h1+ 31 ♔xh1 e1♕+ 32 ♔h2 ♕h4+ (Goldman), or playing for a win with 27...♗c8!? 28 ♘xe4 (28 d7? ♗xd7 29 ♘xd7 ♖d8 ∓ Capablanca; 28 ♗e6 e3 29 ♗xc8 e2) 28...♖d8. Black is not worse.

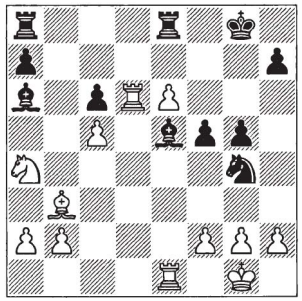
2b2) 26 d7 (Reinfeld) is adequately met by 26...♖d8 (26...♔f6 27 ♖xe4 is likely to transpose) 27 ♖xe4 fxe4 28 ♘c5 ♔f6 29 ♘xa6 ♖xd7 30 ♘c5 ♖d4, when Black's surplus of pawns means he need have no fear his rook will be outgunned by White's minor pieces. Indeed, White's knight is not well placed, and he will need to play vigorously to draw; 31 ♔f2!.

2b3) 26 ♖c1 ♖d8 (26...♗b7? 27 ♘c5 favours White) 27 ♖xc6 ♖xd6 28 ♖c7+ ♔g6 29 ♖xa7 (Heidenfeld) obviously favours Black, who has the more active pieces, the more active pawns, and even chances to set up a mating net. If 29...f4?! 30 ♖e7 ♔f5 31 ♗c2 ♗d3 32 ♗xd3 ♖xd3, White has the tactical resource 33 ♖xe4!, as noted by Heidenfeld, but 29...g4! increases the pressure without risk.

So Black is not losing, nor even worse, if he boldly snatches the rook, after first inserting the check on h2. How then should we assess the text-move? Probably as an extremely good move. It seems at first to gain an important tempo, by ensuring that e7 does not attack the rook. With his next move, White cannot attack directly, he can only threaten to attack. This is not so comfortable for the player who has just sacrificed a piece. Schlechter now faces a difficult decision.

We return to the position after 20...♖fe8 *(D)*:

W



21 g3!

This is unquestionably a major concession, leaving weaknesses on the kingside light squares, which Lasker is not slow to exploit. Schlechter deems it necessary, however, to prevent the check on h2, not because the check is itself inherently dangerous, but rather to prevent the knight getting back to e4 with gain of tempo.

Even with the benefit of hindsight, it is difficult to work out precisely what is going on after the uncompromising 21 h3, which has the benefit of forcing Black to act quickly, and with any luck prematurely. The drawback is that it involves heavy sacrifices of material after 21...♗h2+ 22 ♔h1 ♗xd6 23 cxd6 ♘xf2+ (23...♘f6 24 ♘c5) 24 ♔g1 and now:

1) 24...♘e4?! (recommended by most sources) 25 d7 ♖e7 26 g4! (White has to play violently for the pawns to balance the missing rook) 26...♘d2! (White has no time to save his second rook) 27 gxf5 ♘f3+ 28 ♔f2 ♘xe1 29 ♔xe1 leads to a truly bizarre position in which White has knight and two pawns for two rooks. Black cannot expect to destroy White's passed-pawn-chain merely by greater weight of numbers. The one privilege that his massive material advantage gives him is that he can afford to sacrifice quite heavily to break up White's pawn phalanx. If, for example, Black could eliminate White's three pawns for the cost of rook and bishop, material would be roughly level (♖+♙ vs ♗+♘), the advantage then resting with whoever has established the more active king during the liquidation. Any lesser sacrifice will tend to favour Black, provided of course the pawns are neutralized. It should be borne in mind, however, that White is threatening to trap the bishop with ♘c5, and if this bishop is won, White will have excellent chances of picking up a rook as well.

1a) 29...♖d8 30 f6 ♖dxd7 31 ♘c5! ♗c8! 32 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 33 fxe7 ♗e8 (Burgess) with a complicated, probably ultimately drawn, bishop ending.

1b) 29...♔g7, bringing the king up, is natural. Then, after 30 ♘c5:

1b1) 30...♔f6 31 ♘xa6 ♔xf5 32 ♘c5 (threatening ♘b7) 32...♖d8 33 ♔f2! (33 ♘b7?? ♖dxd7 and the e-pawn is pinned) 33...♔e5 34 ♘b7 (34 ♔e3!?) 34...♖dxd7 35 exd7 ♖xd7 36 ♘a5 with a likely draw.

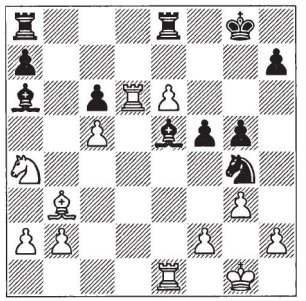
1b2) 30...♖d8 31 ♔f2 (31 ♘xa6? ♖dxd7 picks up the most important of the passed pawns for a minimal material loss; 31 ♘e4 ♖dxd7!) 31...♗c8! 32 dxc8♕ ♖xc8 33 ♔f3 with unclear play. This would be critical, except that Black may improve earlier.

2) The annotator can hardly be blamed for wanting to examine these variations, but there is a massive drawback in that Black may simply play 24...♘d3!, instead of 24...♘e4?!. In this line, it makes an enormous difference that Black's rook is on e8 rather than on f8; White is a big tempo down on the lines with 20...♗xh2+ (instead of 20...♖fe8).

There is of course the highly practical point that if you search for beauty and try to achieve the impossible, the likely result is catastrophic. Even in the most complicated positions, perhaps especially in the most complicated positions, it is a matter of delicate positional judgement assessing what risks are acceptable, and what risks need to be avoided.

We return to the position after 21 g3! *(D)*:

B



21...♗f6

The momentary lull in play, as a result of White having to find a purely defensive move, means that Lasker, presumably much to his relief, is not

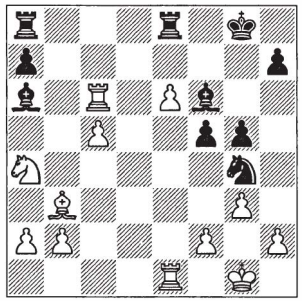
obliged to snatch the rook and allow the duo of passed pawns. He may instead head for a quieter position with a smaller material advantage.

Goldman gives the following line to show what happens if Black takes the rook: 21...♗xd6 22 e7+ ♔g7 23 cxd6 ♗c8(?) 24 ♘c5 ♘f6 25 ♗e6 ♗xe6 26 ♘xe6+ ♔f7 27 ♘c7 "when White must win" (though even this verdict is questionable after 27...♘e4!). The effect for White is spoilt somewhat by the alternative line that Goldman gives: 23...♖ad8!, and if 24 exd8♕??, then 24...♖xe1+ 25 ♔g2 ♗f1+ 26 ♔f3 ♘e5#.

White has no need to hurry with the discovered check; 22 cxd6, threatening, among other things, ♘c5, leaves Black in great difficulties.

22 ♖xc6 *(D)*

B



22...♗b7

A new phase of the game, less wild but still very intense, begins here. White has three pawns for the piece, a rough material equivalent, and two of these pawns are well advanced, though not connected. These pawns, though powerful, are not yet *threatening*, and there is the implication that, especially with several pieces on the board in an open position, the extra piece is to be preferred. However, much depends on the effectiveness by which each side brings their pieces to bear, and this in turn depends in part on the use that each player is able to make of structural weaknesses, caused by pawn advances, in the opponent's position. It will hardly come as a surprise that in the next few moves Black aims to control the long light-square diagonal, and aims his knight towards f3, whereas White plays to double rooks on the seventh, aiming at weaknesses in front of Black's king but behind his kingside pawns. As in so many of Lasker's games, both players are attacking and both players are defending, and it is very difficult to work out precisely what is going on.

Capablanca, in the short-lived magazine *The Chess Weekly* (in articles reprinted in Edward Winter's *Capablanca*) suggested that Black could have achieved a good game by 22...♗b5 23 ♖d6 ♖ac8. These notes were clearly brief and hurried comments, rather than detailed analysis, and Capablanca did not do himself justice in them. White holds the upper hand after 24 ♖d5!, and if 24...♘h6?!, then 25 ♘c3!?, when Black's counterplay is much slower than in the game, in view of the enforced passivity of the knight. Unless there is a pressing tactical reason to do otherwise, it is generally best to play pieces to their most natural and active squares. In this case, the bishop wants to be on b7, not b5.

23 ♖c7 ♗e4

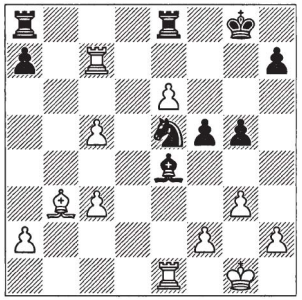
This is of course an even better square for the bishop.

24 ♘c3 ♗xc3

And, unusually for a Dragon, it is the light-squared bishop, not the dark-squared bishop, that needs to be preserved. If 24...♘e5?, then 25 ♘xe4 ♘f3+ 26 ♔h1! ♘xe1? 27 ♘xf6+; or 24...♗d4?! 25 ♘xe4 fxe4 26 ♖xe4 ♗xf2+ 27 ♔g2 ±.

25 bxc3 ♘e5 *(D)*

W



With the white knight on c3 eliminated, Black has excellent control of the centre, and only now, after several moves of wild complications, does one fully feel that Lasker's much earlier decision, not to clarify the game with ...c5 on move 15 or 16, is fully justified; likewise his decision on move 20, to play a quiet waiting move rather than go straight down the critical tactical lines. Yet again, Lasker has played with an amazing sense of balance in what appeared to have been an extremely precarious position. All Schlechter's tactical ingenuity has come to nothing: he is a piece down, his passed pawns are isolated rather than connected, and his kingside is under pressure, with Lasker having superbly exploited the weaknesses on the light squares created by 21 g3.

All seems set for a Lasker win, then, but it is now Schlechter's turn to show his determination under difficulties. Lasker may control the centre, but he does not control the squares immediately behind the centre! Provided the pawn on e6 remains on the board, and provided he can maintain his rook on the seventh rank, White can battle on. Lasker, it has to be said, helps him along in the next few moves; having negotiated immense complications and reached a good position, he appears to relax. Soon the game is unclear again.

26 ♖d1 ♘f3+?

Lasker takes the easy way out, winning an unimportant flank pawn, but losing a couple of critical tempi. The check will not run away, and Goldman suggests that it would have been sensible to remove his own king from the bishop's diagonal with 26...♔h8!, and if then 27 f4?!, Black plays 27...gxf4 28 gxf4 ♖g8+ with a probably winning position. 27 ♔f1 is a natural response, to which Black has several possible replies. One of the simplest is 27...♗d3+ 28 ♔g2 ♖ec8, when Black has secured his position, and can look forward to snipping off a few pawns. 27 ♖d6!? g4 could also be tried, but again White's position does not appear to be fully trustworthy.

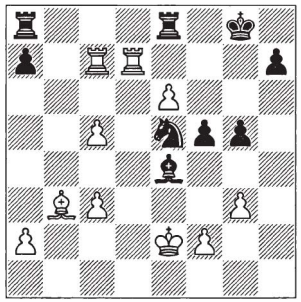
Usually the reason why control of the centre is important in a defensive context is that it prevents the opponent's coordination of effort on the queenside and kingside. Here, unusually, Black's thoroughly centralized minor pieces come between White's advanced forces and his rearguard! And that is how they should have remained.

27 ♔f1 ♘xh2+ 28 ♔e1 ♘f3+ 29 ♔e2 ♘e5

29...♖ac8?? 30 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 31 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 32 e7+ +– Goldman.

30 ♖dd7! *(D)*

B



A comparison between the last two diagrams shows clearly how much ground Lasker has lost with his pawn snatch. One cannot allow the opponent two rooks on the seventh without some degree of suffering.

30...f4

The h7-square has to be guarded. 30...♘xd7 31 exd7+ ♗d5+ 32 dxe8♕+ ♖xe8+ 33 ♔f1 (Schlechter) leads to a winning endgame for White.

31 ♖g7+ ♔h8 32 ♖xg5

Now it's anyone's guess as to who is attacking and who is defending! White's move re-establishes the material balance (three pawns for a piece) and, by forcing the knight to move (after a preliminary check), breaks what was formerly Black's undisputed control of the centre. White's pawn on e6 is still strong, but his other pieces are scattered. Meanwhile, Black has so few pawns that it is difficult to see how he can force a passed pawn, even if he manages to make a successful transition to the endgame. One starts to get the impression that maybe White's pawns will begin to dominate, but the position is of course very finely balanced.

32...♗d3+ 33 ♔d1 fxg3 34 fxg3

34 ♖xe5? gxf2 35 ♖f7 f1♕+ 36 ♖xf1 ♗xf1 37 e7 ♗b5; 34 f4? ♖g8 – Goldman.

34...♘g6

Black has no time to set up the mating net with 34...♘f3?, in view of 35 ♖d5. So the knight comes back to defend, and to make it more difficult for White's pawns to advance.

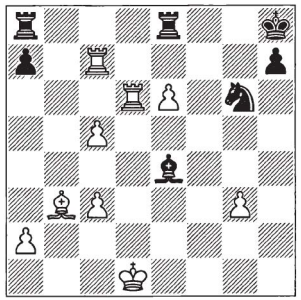
35 ♖d5

Schlechter suggested afterwards that 35 ♗d5 was strong, but after 35...♖ac8! Black's defences hold without difficulty; for example, 36 ♗c6 ♖xc7 37 ♗xe8 ♗e4 38 ♗d7 ♔g7 (and if 39 e7??, then 39...♖xd7+) and the king looks after the e-pawn while the rook blockades the c-pawn. The text-move seems fine; with the g-file blocked, the rook seeks an entry on the d-file.

35...♗e4 36 ♖d6 *(D)*

36 ♖dd7?! ♘e5 allows the knight and bishop to resume their old posts, with *White* this time having lost tempi.

B



36...♗f5

The simplification of the last few moves has been more apparent than real – a brief lull in the action and a couple of pawn exchanges. After regrouping, the position remains just as tense as ever, with the white pawns looking more dangerous than they have done for several moves.

Black has the option of two main defensive plans; either, as chosen by Lasker, to attempt to encircle the noxious e-pawn with ...♗f5 and ...♘f8, or to attempt to exchange rooks with ...♖ac8. Remaining passive is not an option.

If 36...♖ac8, it is not difficult to show that Black is defending after 37 ♖dd7?! ♖xc7 38 ♖xc7 ♖e7!, and if 39 ♖c8+, then 39...♔g7 40 c6 ♘e5 41 ♗a4 ♗f5 42 ♗b3, with a possible repetition. Lasker was presumably more worried about 37 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 38 ♖d7, with White emerging a clear pawn up after 38...♖xc5 39 e7 ♘xe7 40 ♖xe7 ♗f3+ 41 ♔d2. So there is to be no simplification just yet.

37 ♗d5?!

But here Schlechter misses his golden chance, 37 ♖f7!, based on the tactical point 37...♖f8? 38 e7! ♖xf7 39 ♖d8+! and the pawn queens. On 37...♗g4+ 38 ♔c1, the moves of the bishop (...♗d3-e4-f5-g4 in succession) tell a clear story; the bishop is being blown around, rather than adding to a secure defensive formation. 38...♘e5 39 ♖f4, with the threat of ♖e4, increases the bishop's humiliation; if 39...h5, then 40 ♖e4 and with the black centre now on the point of complete dispersion, it is unlikely the defences will hold for long. If instead 38...♘f8, then 39 e7 ♘g6 40 ♗c2 ♖xe7 41 ♗xg6 ♖e1+ 42 ♔d2 ♖e2+ 43 ♔d3 hxg6 44 ♖f4! winning the piece back. Black can of course equalize the pawn-count with 44...♗h5 45 g4 ♖xa2 46 gxh5 gxh5, but White's rooks and passed c-pawn will overwhelm him.

We are often told in endgame books that rooks belong behind passed pawns, as the rook then gives maximum support to the pawn's advance. Here one of the reasons why White has to destroy Black's e4-bishop/e5-knight piece coupling is to clear the e-file for one of the white rooks to get behind the passed pawn.

37...♖ab8! *(D)*

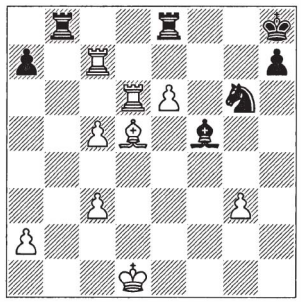
Lasker, having had a close escape, is still alert to traps. He remains in grave danger as a result of his earlier loss of time, and must now play with great care to hold the position.

37...♖ac8? is enticing, and Black survives, maybe even with chances to play for the win, after either 38 ♖xc8? ♖xc8 39 c6 ♘e7 40 c4 ♔g7, and Black's king approaches the centre, or 38 ♗c6? ♖xc7 39 ♗xe8 ♖xc5 40 ♗xg6 ♗xg6. White should play 38 ♖xa7! ♖xc5 39 c4 ♖cc8 (39...♘f8? 40 e7 ♘g6 41 ♖d8 ♖c8 42 ♖a8 ♖xa8 43 ♗xa8 +–) and now White, although stymied in the centre, has a brand new outside passed pawn he can push with 40 a4! ♘f8 41 ♖aa6, with ♖ab6, a5, etc., to follow.

38 c6

So why then, since Black does not even have the resource of capturing the c-pawn (37...♖ac8 38 ♖xa7 ♖xc5), does White not simply take the a-pawn? The obvious answer is that Black would then try for an immediate counter-attack against the white king,

W



using the rook's control of the b-file. However, this would not work, since rook and bishop alone are not sufficient to create a mating net when the target king is in an open position with plenty of flight-squares; and since it will be difficult for Black to bring other pieces in the attack, given White's active pieces and far-advanced pawns.

If 38 ♖xa7, then:

1) 38...♖b1+? 39 ♔d2 ♖b2+ 40 ♔e3 drives the king to a better square.

2) 38...♖b2?! 39 ♖a8 ♖xa8 40 ♗xa8 ♖xa2 41 ♗d5 ±. In practical terms, there is little need to analyse this line in depth to ascertain whether it is a forced win for White or not; Black would only want to play down such a line if it is clear that all the other ideas straightforwardly lose.

3) To have any chance of a successful counter-attack, Black must activate a third piece: 38...♘e5!. Then:

3a) 39 ♔d2? ♖b2+ 40 ♔e3 ♘g4+ 41 ♔f4 (41 ♔d4 ♖d2+ 42 ♔c4 ♘e3+ wins a piece) 41...♖f2+ 42 ♗f3 ♗xe6 43 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 44 ♔xg4 ♖g6+ 45 ♔f4 ♖f6+ and Black emerges a rook ahead. The difference that having a third piece in the attack makes is clearly illustrated.

3b) 39 ♖b7?! ♖xb7 40 ♗xb7 stops the attack, but allows the vital e-pawn to drop.

3c) 39 ♖b6 ♖bd8 40 ♖d6 leads to a repetition of moves after 40...♖b8, if Black should want it. He can, however, play for more with 40...♗xe6!. There are several variations (for example, 41 ♗xe6 ♖xd6+ 42 cxd6 ♖xe6 or 41 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 42 ♖a8 ♖xa8 43 ♗xa8) where White enters an ending with a few weak pawns in return for a piece, but Black's final h-pawn should win the game. Defence by liquidation of pawns usually requires that *all* the opposing pawns need to disappear!

3d) 39 ♗b3 could be considered, but 39...♖bc8! maintains active pressure against the passed pawns.

As so often, Lasker's counterplay in seemingly desperate positions comes in the nick of time.

With the text-move, 38 c6, White makes it much more difficult for the rook on b8 to leave the back rank, in view of ♖b7, c7, etc. So Black must switch his play to attack the e-pawn. This is one of those defensive situations where it is pointless to try to concentrate on defending your weakest points; all you can do is to try to counter-attack the weakest points of your opponent's attacking formation. This policy has particular relevance when battling against a passed pawn or two, since pawns are slow-moving and easy to attack; they cannot make a strategic retreat and then return to the front. In so many attacking positions of this type, the strength of the attack depends largely on the strength of the passed pawn; once the pawn is lost, so is the attack.

38...♘f8 39 ♖b7

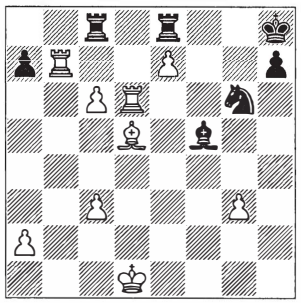
After 39 e7 ♘g6 40 ♗f7 ♖xe7 41 ♗xg6?, the *zwischenzug* 41...♗g4+! allows Black time to capture the rook without losing the bishop.

39...♖bc8

Naturally not 39...♖xb7? 40 cxb7 ♘xe6? 41 ♗xe6 ♗xe6 42 ♖xe6 and the b-pawn queens. Allowing White a c-pawn on the seventh is less dangerous than allowing a b-pawn there, as Black covers the queening square more easily, particularly with two pairs of rooks on the board. Once the e-pawn disappears, the bishop covers c8!

40 e7 ♘g6 *(D)*

W



41 ♗f7

Whether through fatigue (as suggested by Goldman), or in recognition that Black's position is now fully defensible, Schlechter lets the e-pawn drop, but emerges with a drawn position. Since Schlechter's plan is the clearest one to reach a safe position, now that his initiative has been fully countered, there seems little need to speculate over motives.

If 41 ♖dd7, given as a (non-decisive) alternative by Goldman, Black's simplest is to bring the king up with 41...♔g7 and ...♔f6. And if 41 ♖xg6 ♗xg6, Schlechter had no doubt decided that White's main task would be the uphill one of proving that the extra pawns compensated for the rook. There would be no need to involve himself in all this.

41...♖xe7 42 ♗xg6 ♗g4+ 43 ♔c1 ♖e1+ 44 ♔b2 hxg6 45 ♖xg6 ♗f5 46 ♖f6 ♗e4 47 ♖xa7 ♖b1+ 48 ♔a3 ♗xc6 49 ♖h6+ ♔g8 50 ♖g6+ ½-½

Possibly the most difficult game in the book to annotate.

Game L6
Nimzowitsch – Lasker
St Petersburg 1914
Caro-Kann Defence

Two major international events were held in St Petersburg in the years before the War. In the 1909 Chigorin Memorial, Lasker and Rubinstein raced ahead of a very strong field, each finishing with 14½/18, the next players (Duras and Spielmann) scoring only 11. While players of the calibre of Schlechter and Tartakower finished only in mid-table, there were some conspicuous absentees from the 1909 field, players such as Capablanca, Tarrasch and Marshall.

The 1914 tournament was even stronger. A preliminary tournament with eleven players was held, with five

qualifying for the finals. The tournament was so strong that players such as Bernstein, Rubinstein and Nimzowitsch failed to make the cut! Capablanca, Lasker, Tarrasch, Marshall and the rising Russian star Alekhine qualified for the finals, where Lasker played a blinder, scoring a mighty 7/8, overhauling Capablanca's seemingly untouchable 1½ point lead from the preliminaries. Lasker looked out of form in the preliminaries. He lost to Bernstein, and was on the ropes a few times.

In his second-round game against Nimzowitsch, Lasker for the first twenty moves fully lived down to Fischer's assessment of him as "a coffee-house player ... (who) ... knew nothing about openings and didn't understand positional chess." Yet when Lasker is a pawn down without compensation, we soon see a different Lasker, someone with such a deep understanding of the art of defensive chess that he can hold an apparently lost middlegame simply by quietly pushing his king backwards and forwards. The effect is startling and therefore highly instructive. Keres used this game as one of his main examples in his classic essay on "How to Defend Difficult Positions" (in Keres and Kotov, *The Art of the Middle Game*).

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘f6

For 4...♗f5, see Game P3. 4...♘d7 is fashionable now, aiming to recapture with the knight, but the pawn recapture is also worth considering.

5 ♘xf6+ gxf6 *(D)*

Nimzowitsch was one of the great innovators in chess, and indeed was effectively the founder of the 'hypermodern' school of chess. He was engaged in a bitter theoretical, and indeed personal, struggle with Tarrasch on the question of the proper meaning of positional play. Tarrasch strongly emphasized active piece-play and the initiative, tended to downgrade the importance of pawn-structure, and was notoriously impatient of slow manoeuvring battles, which he saw as mere wood-pushing. Nimzowitsch tended to downgrade the importance of the initiative, and was more concerned with the question of prophylaxis, of how the pieces could coordinate with each other in such a way as to render a position unassailable. The detailed relationship between piece-play and pawn-structure was a central element of Nimzowitsch's system.

What then can we say about the diagram position? In what sense, if any, may it be regarded as 'hypermodern'? According to classical theory, Black's pawn-play is suspect, in that he has abandoned any attempt to hold his pawn-centre, and in that he has voluntarily accepted a structural pawn weakness on the kingside, without any compensatory piece activity. If White could keep the position quiet, he would be starting to accumulate some small advantages. Black may take comfort though from the possession of the half-open g-file, which poses the question of how White is going to defend the g-pawn, given that g3 will weaken the light squares. Black is also happy to have the e5-square guarded by a pawn without having to make a weakening move with the f7-pawn. Black has enough pawns in the centre, even if only a small centre, to make it difficult to attack.

Petrosian, an avid disciple of Nimzowitsch's, was partial to such pawn-centres. See Supplementary Game L6.1, in which Petrosian gets a good game against Fischer, helped by some original manoeuvring.

6 ♗e2?!

An uninspired choice, not considered worth mentioning in *ECO* (*vol. B*, 1997). The bishop defends the g-pawn from f3, but lands on a prospectless square. Nimzowitsch's hypermodern opening achieves a moral victory!

The simplest move is 6 c3, providing necessary support for the d-pawn, and waiting to see what Black does before deciding on a detailed plan of development. After 6...♗f5 7 ♘f3 the main lines given by *ECO* are: 7...♕c7 8 g3 e6 9 ♗g2 ♘d7 10 ♕e2 ±; 7...e6 8 g3 ♕d5 9 ♗g2 ♕c4 10 ♗e3 ♘d7 11 ♘h4 ±; or 7...♘d7 8 ♗f4 ♕b6 9 ♗d3! ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 ♕xb2 11 0-0 ♕a3 12 ♖fb1 with dangerous play for the pawn.

If Black's active piece-play may somehow be neutralized, the positional trumps would be White's.

6...♗f5 7 ♗f3 ♕a5+!? 8 c3

White has, almost imperceptibly, become substantially weakened on the queenside light squares, as a result of this pawn-push and the misplacement of his bishop. 8 ♕d2 is, however, a little slow as after 8...♕xd2+ 9 ♔xd2 ♘d7, Black is able to play ...0-0-0 and ...e5 before White is fully developed.

8...h5?!

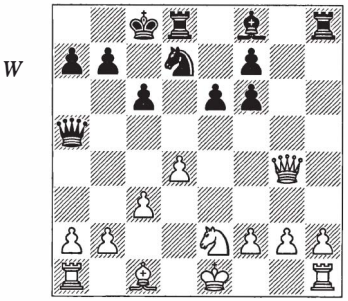
Black's gain of space on the kingside is unimportant if White declines the gambit. 8...♘d7 is more natural.

9 ♗xh5?!

Lasker does not duck the challenge, but the opening of the h-file and the gain of time provide Black with good compensation for the missing pawn. 9 ♕b3!? takes advantage of Black's choice of a non-developing move.

The rust shows in Lasker's play; he had not played a serious tournament or match for over three years.

9...♘d7 10 ♗g4 ♗xg4 11 ♕xg4 0-0-0 12 ♘e2 e6 *(D)*



13 ♗f4

In attempting to cover up weaknesses on the kingside, White opens up a weakness or two on the queenside. Black's basic structure is very

solid, and the open h-file adds a bit of bite to the position. White's problem is that he cannot castle comfortably on the kingside (13 0-0 ♗d6, followed by ...♖dg8 and perhaps ...f5 and ...♘f6-e4, with an obvious attack), while queenside castling is not so safe either.

13 ♘g3 was recommended by Dr Schumer (cited in the tournament book), with the idea of ♕e2. This is a reasonable suggestion, but Black still maintains pressure after 13...f5 14 ♕e2 (14 ♕f3 ♕b5!? 15 ♕e2 ♕d5 transposes) 14...♕d5 15 0-0 ♗e7!? (15...♗d6 16 f4 ♘f6? 17 c4 ♕xd4+?? 18 ♗e3 traps the queen) 16 ♗e3 ♖h4 17 c4 ♕d6. The h2-square is the easiest point on which to focus the attack once White has castled kingside.

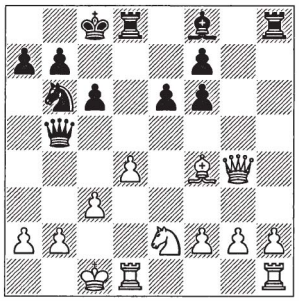
13...♕b5 14 0-0-0?!

This castles straight into an attack. 14 b3 makes more sense. White's king may not be safe on the kingside, and it may not be safe on the queenside either, but if the king can stay in the centre for as long as possible, and if White works on his piece coordination, Black will find it very hard to maintain the pressure on both flanks. White's king then reserves the option of jumping either side, according to how Black plays.

Varnusz gives 14 0-0 ♕xb2 15 ♖ab1 ♕a3 as being better for White, but the queen can keep closer contact with the centre and kingside with 15...♕c2!, when Black looks better.

14...♘b6 *(D)*

With the threat of ...♘c4, against which 15 ♖d2? ♘c4 16 ♖c2 ♘xb2 17 ♖xb2 ♗a3 is clearly not an adequate defence.



W

15 ♘g3?

The only move, according to Yates, but a blunder according to Burn, who notes that Lasker suggested 15 b3 instead. Naturally, after almost ninety years it is impossible to reconstruct what happened in the post-mortem, but one wonders what Lasker said about 14 b3, with the king still uncommitted.

After 15 b3, the plan which most immediately attracts attention is to bring the knight into play with 15...♘d5 16 c4 ♕a5, when it looks fairly obvious that the knight is untouchable in view of the increased exposure of the white king. But in chess, the 'obvious' should not always be taken for granted, and indeed it turns out that White may advantageously play 17 cxd5! ♕xa2 18 d6 ♖xd6 19 ♖d2! (Burgess), with the tactical point that if 19...♕a1+ 20 ♔c2, then 20...♕xh1 is met by 21 ♖d1, trapping the queen. Black may vary, but it is unlikely that he will find satisfactory compensation for the sacrificed piece after 19...♕a1+ 20 ♔c2 ♕a2+ 21 ♔c3 or 19...♕xb3 20 ♕f3. There are other ways of defending for White, for example 17 ♔b1 ♘b4 18 ♖d2!?, but if a piece may be safely accepted, then why not do so?

Black would therefore have to play rather more cautiously, with 15...c5!? being one possible approach. However, the verdict would be 'with compensation for the pawn', rather than any clear plus for Black.

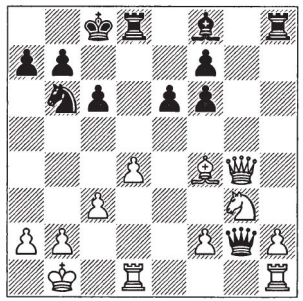
There can often be an extremely fine dividing line between a tenable position and being on the receiving end of a brilliancy. Great care and a steady nerve are required to stay the right side of this line. Lasker did not attempt to go down the critical line with 15 b3, and was soon suffering. It would seem that Lasker's post-mortem instincts were correct, and more accurate than Yates's, when he suggested that White's position would have been defensible after 15 b3!. All this indicates that Lasker had not yet played himself into form, and that 15 ♘g3? was an unforced error.

15...♕d5 16 ♔b1

White can cope with the *advance* of his a-pawn in some lines, but the *loss* of the a-pawn would destroy his king's defences. It is better to allow two pawns on the other side of the board to drop.

16...♕xg2 *(D)*

Gathering pawns while he may.



W

17 ♖dg1!?

A critical point in the defence. There is nothing drastically and decisively wrong with 17 ♖df1!? (and if 17...♖xh2, 18 ♖xh2 ♕xh2 19 ♘h5 f5 20 ♗xh2 fxg4 21 ♘f6!). Undeniably though Black's pieces remain in full control, with material level. There are various ways in which Black can try to make progress, one of them being 17...c5!? 18 ♖hg1 ♕c6 19 dxc5 ♘a4 ∓. White will have an uncomfortable position to defend, since 17 ♖df1, although it maintains the material balance, is highly decentralizing, leaving White with no immediate piece protection (other than the king) from the a-file to the d-file.

Lasker's approach, right or wrong, is that defending such a position is prospectless, and that he would rather try to hold a position a pawn down where he has the more active pieces. He is trying to create the greatest *practical* difficulties for his opponent. It may well be that we are seeing Lasker the chess psychologist in action, and that Lasker would not have played the same move against a different opponent. It is better against Nimzowitsch, he might have reasoned, to let him have the extra pawn, but in a position where there are severe technical difficulties, rather than let him extend his python-like grip on the position through systematic manoeuvring.

17...♕xf2 18 ♘e4

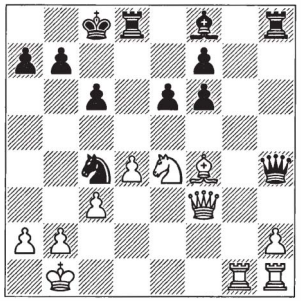
White's first genuine sign of activity for a long time.

18...♕h4 19 ♕f3 ♘c4 *(D)*

20 ♔a1

Lasker's first 'mysterious' king move has an obvious motivation; he

W



wants to get out of range of any checks, either by the knight or the queen. There are some much stranger king moves to come.

It is clear that for the time being Lasker controls the centre, and that Nimzowitsch is unable, for the time being, to coordinate his kingside and queenside forces. Even though he is a pawn up, Black has realistic winning chances only if he can dispute White's central control. This inevitably involves Black in pushing pawns, which will in turn reduce the flexibility of Black's pawn-structure. Lasker therefore still has hopes of creating an outpost in Black's position – a knight entrenched on e5 would be useful. He will be unable to achieve this by force, but he will always be able to make Nimzowitsch aware that there are real dangers in pressing for victory.

20...f5 21 ♘g5 ♗d6!

This powerful move is an important step forward for Black. If now 22 ♘xf7?, then 22...♕xf4 wins material, while 22 ♗xd6 ♘xd6 leaves Black with a fully coordinated position to accompany his extra pawn. Sometimes, exchanging pieces is a serious threat.

22 ♗c1!

Even in the most awful of positions, Lasker played calmly, distinguishing between affordable concessions and fatal concessions.

The bishop moves to an unpromising square, but at least it remains on the board, providing extra cover for the king, and preventing an invasion along the h6-c1 diagonal. When some pieces have to be placed passively, it is essential that others are placed actively; White's knight on g5 is a tremendous nuisance for Black, both attacking his kingside pawns and preventing an invasion on e4. It is so strong partly because it has the full support of the 'passive' bishop. Meanwhile Black's minor pieces still lack coordination.

22...♖d7 23 ♖g2

Lasker follows Steinitz's theory of defence: he voluntarily strengthens the weakest points, the lines of least resistance, in his position. In so doing, he also gives life to his strong points. The second rank is covered, and White prepares to bring his other rook into play on an active square.

23...♗c7 24 ♖hg1?

But this, sadly, looks like a serious defensive lapse. White neglects the centre in favour of the much less relevant plan of doubling rooks on the g-file, and as a result Black soon takes over in the centre. The path of maximum resistance would have been 24 ♕e2 ♘d6 25 ♘f3, with White prepared to stake his claims with ♘e5 and ♗g5, etc. White would then only be slightly worse.

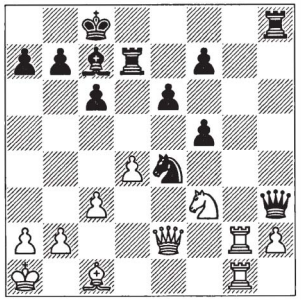
24...♘d6 25 ♕e2

A move too late. Now Black is the first to centralize his knight.

25...♘e4 26 ♘f3 ♕h3 *(D)*

Schumer suggested 26...♕h5!? as better. Lasker would presumably have 'played dead', as in the game.

W



27 a3

Here we welcome Paul Keres, a great player and a top-class writer, to the debate. Keres notes that White's position is lost, and that few players would wish to continue the struggle. This should not be taken as meaning that they would resign immediately; rather a few token moves of resistance might follow, and then 0-1 on the tournament score-table.

Keres suggests that the natural inclination would be to exchange Black's dominating knight on e4 by playing 27 ♘g5 ♘xg5 28 ♗xg5, but that Black would then have 28...f4! 29 ♕e4 (29 ♖f2 ♖g8) 29...f3 30 ♖f2 ♖g8, with either 31 ♕xf3 ♕xf3 32 ♖xf3 ♗xh2 or 31 ♖xf3 ♕xh2 decisively favouring Black. This, suggests Keres, would be objectively the strongest. Lasker though, as Keres notes, thought differently. If White plays passively, then Black has no immediate threat he can carry out, so he is forced to regroup. Lasker as White then quietly waits, seeing what the opponent is getting up to, and preparing to pounce on the slightest mistake in order to seize counterplay, maybe using the doubled rooks on the g-file.

This leaves the interesting question unanswered of whether in a losing position one reasonable defensive try could be described as *objectively* better or worse than another; if the opponent plays correctly, he will win! Any defensive choice in such a position quite properly has a subjective element; what, bearing in mind the opponent's abilities and inclinations, is the move most likely to induce him or her to err? Lasker's choice cannot be faulted in this respect; it is not inferior to 27 ♘g5.

27...a6

Black too is content to wait, but this move carries no strategic necessity, as Black, unlike White, was in no danger of potential back-rank mates.

28 ♗e3

With a flight-square available for the king, White may safely play this.

28...♖hd8 29 ♔a2

29 ♘g5 ♕h4! (Keres) only helps Black.

29...♖h8 30 ♔a1!

Amazing play – from the practical point of view! Nimzowitsch shows himself content to shuffle his pieces backwards and forwards to gain a little time on the clock, safe in the assumption that since he has the extra pawn and better-placed pieces, this will do his position no serious damage. There is always the danger for the defender that he will try to 'refute' this passive play, and over-press, thereby creating weaknesses and accelerating defeat.

Lasker does not try to 'improve' his position; his pieces are ideally placed for defence anyway.

In an endgame, waiting defence is often essential. There would be few strategic weaknesses which need defending (but these are usually absolutely essential to defend), and few attacking pieces that may be deployed, so it is usually possible to identify an ideal defensive formation against each configuration of attacking pieces. Quite often, a defending piece may need do no more than cover a queening square, and the game may be drawn, provided this defence is maintained.

In middlegames, it would be very rare for such waiting defences to be successfully employed, because the attacker has much greater facility for a sudden switch in the direction of the attack. However, provided the defender is alert to any such change of front, temporarily remaining passive, keeping pieces on good squares, is occasionally an option.

30...♖hd8 31 ♔a2 ♖e8

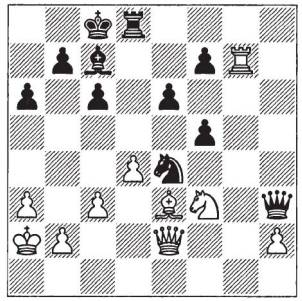
Black is forced to play constructively in order to avoid the draw. He wants to play ...f6, maybe followed by ...e5, without leaving any weak point on the e-file. This encourages Lasker to force an exchange of rooks; some progress for Nimzowitsch!

32 ♖g8 ♖xg8 33 ♖xg8+ ♖d8 34 ♖g7! *(D)*

Is the attack on f7 a phantom? Or does it signify a real danger? Even asking this question evidently flusters Nimzowitsch, who seems to have no clear idea how to proceed.

34...♖d7 35 ♖g8+ ♖d8 36 ♖g7 ♖f8?!

B



It shouldn't be Black who is defensively minded! 36...♕h8 is worth considering, and if White plays 37 ♖xf7?, then 37...♕g8 38 ♖e7 ♗d6. The most sensible and direct move, suggested by Dr Schumer in the *Westminster Gazette*, is 36...♕h5!, which as well as being positionally logical, carries the direct threat of ...♗xh2. If 37 ♕g2, then maybe 37...♗d6, giving Lasker the problem of working out whether he must prepare for ...♗f8 or ...♗e7-f6.

37 c4!

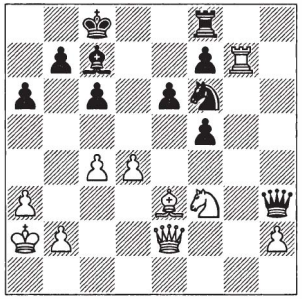
With the black rook now temporarily off-centre, Lasker, passive for so long, starts to press forward. The white pawn on d4 is weakened, thus encouraging a potential later thrust by Black of ...c5 or ...e5, but this must remain extremely hypothetical given that Black is tied up defending his own weak points.

37...♘f6?! *(D)*

Flummoxed, Nimzo switches to direct attack, but Lasker has worked out the tactics more accurately.

Burn suggested the slow-motion 37...♔d8 followed by ...♔e8, covering the weakness on f7 with the king, and allowing more freedom of action for the other pieces. Keres advocated the more direct 37...♕h8, and if 38 ♕g2, then 38...♗d8 (or 38...♘f6); or 38 ♖g2 ♖g8 (or again 38...♘f6). In that case, according to Keres, "probably all Lasker's powerful defensive skill would not have availed him".

W



38 ♗g5! ♘h5

With ideas of forcing favourable simplification after 39 ♖h7 ♘f4, but White has his own combination.

If Black wants to play on, he has to try 38...♘e4, but White can improve his position by 39 ♗e7 ♖e8 40 ♗b4!?, and the win has receded a little more from Black. This seems the most secure plan for White; Keres analyses the uncompromising 40 ♖xf7 ♕g4 41 ♗h4 ♕g6! (41...♖h8?! 42 ♗f6!) 42 ♖e7 ♖h8, and notes that while White has got his pawn back, his pieces have become seriously disorganized.

39 ♖xf7! ♖xf7 40 ♕xe6+ ♖d7

If 40...♔b8, then White plays the intermediate check 41 ♕e8+ before taking on f7.

41 ♘e5! ♗xe5 42 ♕e8+ ½-½

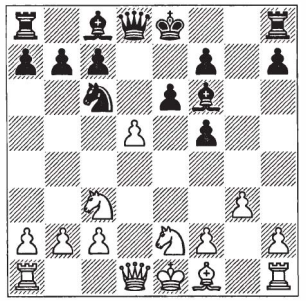
It is likely that Lasker had envisaged the outlines of the main tactical snares well in advance. Black was never forced to fall for this trick, but it was difficult to make progress without creating slight gaps in coordination that allow for tactical chances. Lasker sat tight, and waited for his opponent to play loose.

Supplementary Game

Game L6.1
Fischer – Petrosian
Buenos Aires Ct (3) 1971
French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 dxe4 5 ♘xe4 ♗e7 6 ♗xf6 gxf6!? 7 g3 f5 8 ♘c3 ♗f6 9 ♘ge2 ♘c6 10 d5 *(D)*

B



10...exd5!

Petrosian knew how to accumulate small disadvantages for the sake of the greater good! Even though this exchange of pawns apparently cripples his kingside pawn-structure, with skilful play the pawns, working together with the pieces, will maintain Black's influence in the centre. Meanwhile, Black has the bishop-pair in an open position, a definite asset.

11 ♘xd5 ♗xb2 12 ♗g2 0-0

The pawn was hot enough, but it would be crazy to accept the exchange; Black's dark squares would be fatally weak.

13 0-0 ♗h8 14 ♘ef4 ♘e5 15 ♕h5 ♘g6 16 ♖ad1 c6 17 ♘e3 ♕f6

Black has covered all his potential kingside weaknesses, while the long-term security of White's queenside is doubtful. Black is slightly better.

18 ♔h1 ♗g7 19 ♗h3 ♘e7 20 ♖d3 ♗e6 21 ♖fd1 ♗h6 22 ♖d4

22 ♘xe6! – Petrosian and Suetin.

22...♗xf4 23 ♖xf4 ♖ad8 24 ♖xd8? ♖xd8 25 ♗xf5? ♘xf5 26 ♘xf5 ♖d5 ∓ 27 g4 ♗xf5

27...♔h8! – Petrosian and Suetin.

28 gxf5 h6 29 h3 ♔h7 30 ♕e2 ♕e5 31 ♕h5 ♕f6 32 ♕e2 ♖e5

Petrosian and Suetin suggested afterwards that 32...b5 or, on the next move, 33...b5 would have kept winning chances.

33 ♕d3 ♖d5 ½-½

Game L7
Capablanca – Lasker
St Petersburg 1914
Ruy Lopez

There were only three tournaments that Lasker, Capablanca and Alekhine all played in, and these were played at very wide intervals.

St Petersburg 1914
1 Lasker 6½/10 + 7/8 = 13½/18
2 Capablanca 8 + 5 = 13
3 Alekhine 6 + 4 = 10
(top five players from the preliminaries qualified for the finals)

New York 1924
1 Lasker 16/20
2 Capablanca 14½
3 Alekhine 12

Nottingham 1936
1 = Capablanca 10/14
6 Alekhine 9
7 = Lasker 8½
(1 = Botvinnik 10; 3 = Euwe, Fine, Reshevsky 9½)

Given that Lasker was 67 at the time of the Nottingham tournament, his relatively low placing there should not be regarded as especially significant when assessing his lifetime performance. Alekhine and Capablanca were in their early to mid-twenties at the time of the St Petersburg tournament.

A distinct pecking order emerges where tournament chess is concerned; Lasker was best, then Capablanca, then Alekhine. There is, however, the small complicating matter that Alekhine beat Capablanca in a match in 1927, while Capablanca beat Lasker in a match in 1921, completely reversing the order derived from tournament play. This has generated an entertaining parlour game among chess-players; who was the best out of Lasker, Capablanca and Alekhine? And how did Botvinnik compare with these three?

My own inclination would be to follow the tournament results. By 1921, when Lasker played Capablanca, Lasker was already in his early fifties, slightly older than Botvinnik when he bowed out of the world championship arena, and he was clearly half-hearted about the idea of going through the rigours of a full-scale World Championship match. Capablanca was younger and fitter, did not have these inhibitions, and won the match comfortably. In terms of age, what was surprising was not that Capablanca won the 1921 match in Havana, but rather that Lasker was able to come ahead of him at New York 1924, Moscow 1925, and even Moscow 1935. Of course, the matter could have been settled more conclusively if Lasker had managed to play Capablanca during his peak years. That Capablanca did not play Lasker before 1914 was mainly the responsibility of Lasker; there were negotiations, but they broke down, not through Capablanca's fault. A second round of negotiations was held at St Petersburg, but war broke out before Lasker could play against either Capablanca or Rubinstein.

Because of the preliminaries-and-finals format at St Petersburg, Lasker and Capablanca met three times, Lasker winning once and drawing twice. The win was convincing, Capablanca never getting his pieces working properly in an Exchange Ruy. Lasker's defences were, however, tested severely in the two drawn games. In the preliminaries, Lasker left himself very weak on the light squares on the kingside, ending up with an e5-f6-g5-h6 pawn formation in front of his king. Capablanca, instead of redirecting his light-squared bishop to the kingside, tried to play on both flanks, and Lasker was given the breathing space to construct a defence. In the finals, Lasker was made to suffer for a full hundred moves before escaping with the draw.

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5

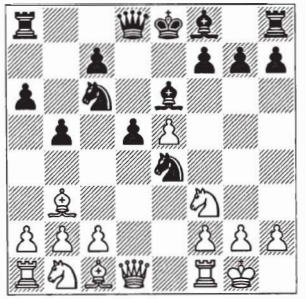
Two weeks earlier, Capablanca had preferred the Spanish Four Knights (3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗b5 ♗b4) against Lasker.

3...a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4

The Open Variation, in which Black gains active piece-play, at the cost of having to make concessions in pawn-structure. It was played four times at St Petersburg, with Black scoring 50%. It has been a favourite choice, at various times, of Tarrasch, Euwe, Korchnoi and Anand.

6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 *(D)*

W



9 ♘bd2

This move is currently the favourite choice, for reasons that would have been undreamed of in 1914. White reasons that it is not so terrible if Black gains the bishop-pair with 9...♘c5, because the knight manoeuvre is time-consuming. In two earlier games in the

tournament, Lasker tried the more cautious 9 c3:

1) Lasker-Rubinstein went well for Lasker: 9...♗c5 10 ♘bd2 0-0 11 ♗c2 ♘xd2 (11...f5 is now preferred) 12 ♕xd2 f6 13 exf6 ♖xf6 (13...♕xf6?! 14 ♕d3 ♕f5 15 ♕e2 ♕f6 16 ♗g5 ♕f7 17 ♗e3 ± Capablanca) 14 ♘d4 (14 b4! ±) 14...♘xd4 15 cxd4 ♗b6?! (15...♗d6!) 16 a4! ±. White went on to win a classic rook and bishop endgame, which would be an immediate choice for any 'Lasker plays the endgame' collection.

2) Lasker-Tarrasch was much less pleasurable for the World Champion: 9...♗e7 10 ♘bd2 0-0 11 ♖e1?! (11 ♗c2!?; 11 ♕e2!?) 11...♘c5 12 ♗c2 (12 ♘d4 ♘xd4 13 cxd4 ♘d3 ∓) 12...d4! (a thematic break) 13 cxd4 ♘xd4 14 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 and White had no compensation for his inferior development. Lasker decided his best practical chance was to head for an ending with 15 ♘b3 (later theory suggests 15 ♕e2 holds the balance) 15...♘xb3 16 axb3 ♕xd1 17 ♖xd1, and after 17...c5 18 ♗d2 ♖fd8 19 ♗a5 ♖xd1+ 20 ♖xd1 f6 21 ♗c3 fxe5 22 ♗xe5 ♖d8, Tarrasch was ultimately unable to find a winning line. Probably he was a little too eager to simplify; White has no entry points on the d-file, and 22...a5!? ties him down unpleasantly. Black would then start to shift play to the queenside.

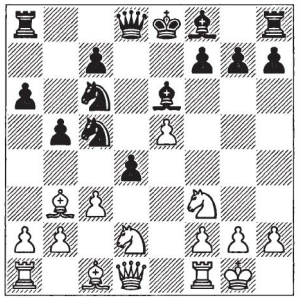
9...♘c5 10 c3 d4 *(D)*

An aggressive and logical thrust, but currently players with the black pieces are preferring 10...♗e7 or 10...♗g4.

11 cxd4

One wonders whether Capablanca considered the move 11 ♘g5! for even

W



the briefest instant; or whether Lasker had any inkling that it was possible. The immediate tactical point is that 11...♕xg5 is met by 12 ♕f3, regaining the piece (12...♔d7 13 ♗d5!), although play remains sharp and complicated after, for example, 12...0-0-0 13 ♗xe6+ fxe6 14 ♕xc6 ♕xe5. This line, which had eluded top grandmasters for over 60 years, was discovered by the highly inventive Russian GM and analyst Igor Zaitsev, Karpov's back-room worker in various World Championship matches. It was first played in Karpov-Korchnoi, Baguio City Wch (10) 1978, play continuing 11...dxc3 12 ♘xe6 fxe6 13 bxc3 ♕d3 14 ♘f3 ♕xd1 15 ♖xd1 ±. Even this brief sequence of moves left scope for improvement for both sides; 14 ♗c2! gained Kasparov a sensational victory over Anand in 1995.

11...♘xd4 12 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 13 ♗xe6 ♘xe6

Burn suggested 13...fxe6 14 ♕f3 ♕d5 in the English-language tournament book. *ECO* gives 14 ♘f3 ♕d5 15 ♗g5 h6 16 ♗e3 0-0-0 17 ♗xc5 ♕xd1 18 ♖fxd1 ♗xc5 = Przewoznik-Pokojowczyk, Lodz 1980. White has no need to provoke ...h6 though; 15 ♗e3!?, and

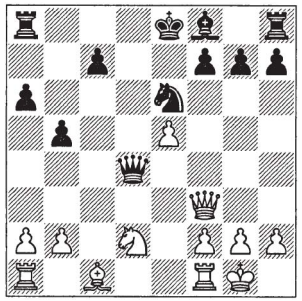
if 15...0-0-0, then 16 ♘g5 ± ♕xe5?? 17 ♕xd8+.

The text-move is fine; there is no need for Black to compromise his pawn-structure.

14 ♕f3 *(D)*

ECO cites Velimirović-Szmetan, Buenos Aires OL 1978: 14 ♕c2 c5 15 ♘f3 ♕d5 16 ♖d1 ♕c6 17 ♘g5 ♗e7 =. Improvements may be suggested for both sides in this line. 16 ♗e3 ± is more logical than Velimirović's choice, both developing and centralizing, but earlier the simple 14...♕c5 looks fine for Black.

B



14...♖d8!

An accurate defensive parry by Lasker. If we try to imagine ourselves back to the early days of this system, when 10...d4 was something new, Capablanca's moves seem very straightforward and natural, and it can only be this defensive resource that holds Black's position together. The rook supports the queen's retreat to d5 (centralization), and 15 ♕c6+ is ineffective for tactical reasons.

15 a4

Trying to break up Black's queenside.

15 ♕c6+ ♕d7 16 ♕xa6? leaves White's queen in an obvious dead-end. 16...♗b4 17 ♘f3 ♘c5 (more forceful than 17...♕d5 18 ♕a7, as given in *ECO*) 18 ♕a7 0-0 ∓.

15...♕d5?!

Sticking to his main defensive plan, but falling behind in development, and thus allowing White to build up pressure. Nenarokov suggests that 15...♗b4 equalizes; for example, 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♕c6+ ♕d7 18 ♕xd7+ ♖xd7 =. There is no joy for White in 16 ♕c6+ ♕d7 17 ♕xa6? ♗xd2 18 ♖d1 ♘c5!.

The developing move fits into the principle of good defence – or good attack! – of getting as many pieces working together as possible. Indeed, what is development but the most basic form of prophylaxis? In the opening, it is purely incidental whether a developing move attacks anything (although developing with gain of tempo is useful). A developing move is intrinsically not an attacking move or a defensive move; it is a move which, by bringing a piece off its starting square, improves the internal coordination of the pieces. If your pieces work well together, they can generally ward off most of your opponent's attacks almost reflexively; you will mostly avoid having to deal with the more difficult problem of 'direct defence', of warding off all your opponent's attacks when they have become truly threatening.

Lasker had a less fully evolved prophylactic sense than, say, Capablanca, Petrosian or Karpov, and as a result had to rely a lot more on 'direct defence'. In this game, his error, seemingly minor, condemns him to more than 80 moves of hard work.

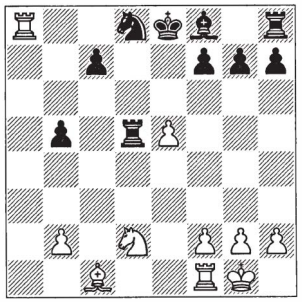
16 ♕xd5 ♖xd5 17 axb5 axb5

Indeed we must not discount the possibility that Lasker was playing this position for an advantage. Black has a healthy 2-1 queenside pawn-majority, while White's e-pawn does not look to be in good fettle.

18 ♖a8+ ♘d8 *(D)*

Again, perhaps too ambitious. The alternative 18...♖d8 19 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 20 ♘e4 leaves White better developed though; the plan is to gain space with ♗e3 and f4.

W



Now how does White defend that pawn?

19 ♘e4!

Capablanca ably illustrates the principle that defensive moves make for poor defence. Naturally such a generalization should not be turned into dogma, and there are at times weaknesses which absolutely have to be defended passively. However, the alert defender will be asking, when a pawn of his or hers is attacked, not just "how do I defend this pawn?" but also "if my opponent is kind enough to take time out to attack my pawn, how can I ensure that I get massive counterplay when I let the pawn go?" Not all defensive problems may be solved by pawn sacrifices of this type, but sometimes the trick works.

In fairness to Lasker, the strength of this move would not have been easy to appreciate when he played 15...♕d5. Chess is not an easy game. Had it been easy, players of the past would have been able to play twenty moves of perfect chess without difficulty, giving opening theory little scope for further evolution. We should be grateful to the pioneers for making the first steps towards modern chess understanding.

19 ♘f3? ♗e7 would have left White with the worse position; his pieces just do not coordinate.

19...♖xe5

Black might just as well follow White's intended line; 19...♗e7 20 f4 is unappetizing.

20 ♖d1 ♗e7 21 f3 ♖f5

On 21...0-0, 22 ♖d7? is at first tempting, but 22...♘e6! covers everything. After 22 ♗f4 ♖f5 23 ♗xc7 ♘e6 24 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 25 ♗b6!? the rook on f5 could easily turn out to be slightly misplaced, since the two files it wants to go to, the c- and d-files, are covered by white pieces.

In the game, the rook still gets caught on this awkward square, but White's bishop is kept out of play for slightly longer.

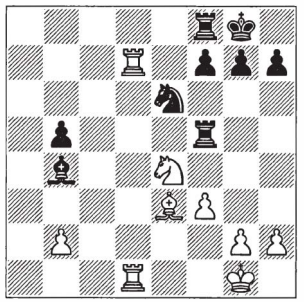
22 ♖c8

Capablanca exploits a small tactical trick to regain the pawn: 22...c6?? 23 ♖cxd8+ ♗xd8 24 ♘d6+.

Tarrasch recommended a rather sharper try: 22 g4 ♖xf3 23 ♔g2 ♖b3 24 ♘c5 ♖b4 25 ♘b7 0-0 26 ♘xd8 ♖xg4+ 27 ♔f3. Now Tarrasch gives, according to Varnusz, 27...♖g6 28 ♗f4 with an excellent position for White. 27...♖c4 is a tougher defence; Black will have three pawns for the piece, and White will have obvious problems in coordinating his forces.

22...0-0 23 ♖xc7 ♗b4 24 ♗e3 ♘e6 25 ♖cd7 *(D)*

B



Only now may we say that both sides have completed their development, in that they have castled into safety and brought all their remaining pieces into play. Despite the fact that we are already very close to an endgame, we have only just shifted, thematically, from the early middlegame, where the opponent who is ahead in development strives to secure positional advantages before the opponent is fully activated, to the full middlegame, where there is little more preliminary mobilization that can be done, and where, if tactics do not dominate, we need to assess semi-permanent advantages and disadvantages in terms of piece mobility and pawn-structure.

On these last two counts, the prospects appear bleak for Lasker as Black. His rooks are uncoordinated, whereas Capablanca's are doubled on the most important of the four open files. Black's bishop on b4 is marginalized and can attack nothing, whereas White's bishop on e3, while short of targets, covers several key central squares, thereby reducing the effectiveness of both Black's minor pieces and also the rook on f5. If we consider pawn-structures, the one weak pawn is Black's pawn on b5. If this is lost without compensation, White will almost certainly win the game. The one bright spot for Black is that if he can *exchange* b-pawns, he will almost certainly be able to draw the game. Endgames where all the pawns are on the same side of the board, and where the defending king can cover the queening square, tend to be drawn for all normal material balances, though there are of course exceptions.

25...♖c8

Lasker has a clear objective in mind: to get at White's b-pawn.

26 ♖1d5?!

Bobby Fischer once pointed out that Capablanca's endgame technique was by no means as flawless as earlier generations of writers and critics had assumed. Capablanca has played excellently to establish this dominating position against Lasker, but his offer of the rook exchange supports Fischer's contention. After Capablanca's chosen move, Lasker can *by force* reach a position where all the pawns are on the same side of the board, and although Capablanca has, as compensation, bishop and knight against rook, Lasker's defences are not unduly troubled.

26 ♘d6! ♗xd6 27 ♖7xd6 would have been more troublesome for Black, who has to deal not only with possible pressure against his b-pawn, but also

with White's control of the centre, which may easily translate (with, for example, a rook on d7, a bishop on c3, and a carefully managed kingside pawn-push) into pressure on Black's kingside. A continuation such as 27...♖e5 28 ♔f2 ♖c2+ 29 ♖1d2 ♖xd2+ 30 ♗xd2 is certainly no guarantee of an easy draw for Black, and without wishing to embark on pages of analysis, it may fairly be suggested that in practical terms White's chances of winning are excellent. His bishop is better than Black's knight, and his king is easier to activate.

Capablanca was playing in "the early days of chess science" (if we may borrow a phrase from Nimzowitsch), and it may well simply not have been established theory that rook can generally hold against bishop and knight with three pawns each on the same flank. When Dvoretsky, in *Secrets of Chess Training*, discusses an endgame (Romanishin-Dvoretsky, Leningrad 1974) with similar material forces, the example of previous practice he chooses is – Capablanca-Lasker, St Petersburg 1914!

26...♖xd5 27 ♖xd5 ♖c2!

Burn is quoted in the tournament book as suggesting that 27...♖b8 is safer. Quite the contrary! Black takes upon himself the extra obligation of a passive rook, and does not challenge White's central control, nor does he put much in the way of a general kingside pawn advance by White.

28 b3

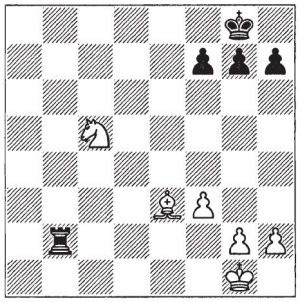
Black is safe after 28 ♖xb5 ♖xb2 29 ♖b8+ ♘f8, with threats of ...♖b1+. So White forces Black to capture the pawn on a less favourable square.

28...♖b2 29 ♖xb5 ♖xb3 30 ♗d2

30 ♖b8+ ♘f8 31 ♗d2?? ♗c5+.

30...♗c5+! 31 ♖xc5 ♘xc5 32 ♘xc5 ♖b2 33 ♗e3 *(D)*

B



Lasker has reached his target endgame, but still has to decide his defensive deployments. His king is required purely for defence, since his own pawns are vulnerable and need cementing, and since there is nothing for the king to attack anyway. This means that mid-board operations will be contested by ♗+♘+♔ vs ♖, a marked superiority of forces for White. Black can, however, call on his king and pawns as extra resources should White ever make an approach to his fortress, and the agile rook will, by giving the occasional check and otherwise keeping pressure on White's pieces, prevent White from achieving full coordination of his forces.

This leaves Black the problem of how he should arrange his pawn-structure. Black must avoid situations where White can reach a winning pawn endgame by capturing a pawn, winning ♖+♙ for ♗+♘. Passive defence of the pawns by king and rook alone is not enough. However, there is also the opposite danger that if Black were to place all his pawns on light squares, safe from the bishop, he would have a whole complex of weak dark squares, facilitating infiltration by the white pieces. Lasker sets up a pawn-structure with pawns on f6, g7 and h6, the reasoning being that the f- and h-pawns are then safe from attack by pieces, whereas there is no satisfactory diagonal by which the bishop may attack the g7-pawn.

By its very nature, the next stage of play is not particularly exciting, with Capablanca probing for weaknesses, Lasker holding firm, and neither side breaking the balance of the position. A lapse of concentration could prove fatal for the defender.

33...♖e2 34 ♗f2 f6 35 ♔f1 ♖a2 36 g4 ♔f7 37 ♘e4 h6

Completing his pawn fortress. In the absence of any substantial error by Black, the only possible breakthrough by White is g5, but that is still a long way off.

38 ♔g2 ♖a3 39 f4 ♖b3 40 ♘g3 ♖a3 41 ♘f1 ♖d3 42 ♘e3 ♖c3 43 ♔f3 ♖a3 44 f5 ♖a2 45 ♘d5 ♖b2 46 ♘f4 ♖a2 47 h4 ♖a5

A good defensive square for the rook, making it impossible for White even to think about g5 just yet. The pressure on the f-pawn also ties the white knight to f4, in view of a possible ...h5 counter-break. White has made as much progress as possible with one tack, and so decides to regroup.

48 ♗d4 ♖a3+ 49 ♗e3 ♖a5 50 ♘h5 ♖a4 51 ♘g3 ♔g8 52 ♘e4 ♔f7 53 ♗d2

A minor gain of ground, in that Capablanca has deprived Lasker of use of the a5-square. Black's defensive resources are sufficient, even so.

53...♖a1

In endgames, defending rooks are often best placed on the edge of the board, where they can move around quickly without running into a clutter of other pieces. So long as they can *control* lines on the main part of the battlefield, it does not matter so much where they are *located*.

54 ♗c3 ♖f1+ 55 ♘f2 ♖c1 56 ♗d4 ♖e1 57 ♘e4 ♖f1+ 58 ♗f2 ♖a1 59 ♔f4 ♖a4 60 ♗c5 ♖c4 61 ♔f3 ♖c1 62 ♗f2 ♖a1 63 ♔f4 ♖a4 64 ♔f3 ♖a3+?!

One must be careful of anachronisms here, in view of detailed changes in the laws concerning tournament play. Under modern rules, Black could claim a draw here if he notified his intention to play 64...♖a1, repeating the position after 58...♖a1 and after 62...♖a1. Currently, it is threefold repetition of *position* that counts, and not threefold repetition of *moves*. This may not necessarily have been the case in 1914.

The text-move is OK, but Capablanca gets a chance to enliven the position.

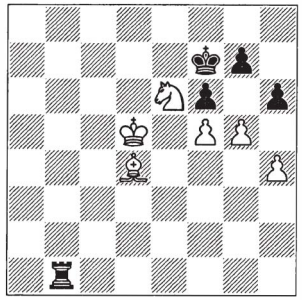
65 ♗e3 ♖a5 66 ♘c5 ♖a1 67 ♘e6 ♖a3 68 ♔e4 ♖a4+ 69 ♗d4 ♖b4 70 ♔e3 ♖b3+ 71 ♔e4 ♖b4 72 ♔d5 ♖b1 73 g5 *(D)*

Finally the balance is broken, but to no avail. Black can defend, provided he takes care with the tactical points.

73...hxg5 74 hxg5 fxg5 75 ♘xg5+

There is no real future in taking the other pawn, since Black would then have a passed pawn to add to his defensive assets. If 75 ♘xg7, the simplest defence is 75...♖f1, and if 76 ♔e4, then 76...♖f4+ followed by ...♖xd4.

B



75...♔g8 76 ♘e6 ♖d1!

With White down to his last pawn, the king and pawn ending arising after 77 ♘xg7 ♖xd4+ 78 ♔xd4 ♔xg7 is an easy draw.

77 ♔e4 ♔f7 78 ♘g5+

If 78 ♗xg7, then 78...♖e1+ 79 ♔d5 ♖f1 80 ♔e5 ♖e1+, etc. The momentary dislocation of White's minor pieces is enough to allow Black a perpetual attack by the rook.

Capablanca tried to squeeze a little bit more, but with no success.

78...♔g8 79 ♔e5 ♖e1+ 80 ♔f4 ♖f1+ 81 ♔g4 ♖d1 82 ♘f3 ♖f1 83 ♗e5 ♔f7 84 ♔f4 ♔g8 85 ♔e4 ♖d1 86 ♘g5 ♖e1+ 87 ♔d5 ♖d1+ 88 ♔e6 ♖e1 89 ♘h3 ♖b1 90 ♘f4 ♖b6+ 91 ♔e7 ♖b5 92 ♘g6 ♖b6 93 ♗d6 ♖a6 94 ♔e6 ♖b6 95 ♘e7+ ♔h7 96 ♘c8 ♖a6 97 ♘e7 ♖b6 98 ♘d5 ♖a6 99 ♘c3 ♔g8 100 ♘e4 ♖b6 ½-½

Game L8
Alekhine – Lasker
New York 1924
Queen's Gambit, Exchange Variation

Capablanca's reputation for invincibility was at its peak in the early 1920s. He had lost only eight serious games in his rise to the World Championship – a remarkable statistic which Botvinnik later acknowledged as a major inspiration to him. Capa, at the beginning of the great New York tournament in 1924, had not lost a game since 1916, and had played an entire World Championship match with Lasker without losing a single game, and without ever looking like losing one. When he lost a game at New York, to Réti, it was sensational news, and not just in the chess press either.

It was not Capablanca who won the New York tournament though, nor even his successor as World Champion, Alekhine, nor Marshall, Réti, Maroczy or Bogoljubow. Rather, it was Lasker, generally regarded as a fading force, who scored a stunning 16/20 in a strong double-round tournament, ahead of Capablanca (14½), Alekhine (12), etc. This was the sort of dominance that Lasker was achieving in the late 1890s, with the big difference that Capablanca and Alekhine were a whole generation more advanced in knowledge and technique than even the best players of the 1890s. Also, from the sporting point of view, we must remember that Lasker was no longer in his late twenties, but rather in his mid-fifties! As the

standard of play around him improved, Lasker's play improved too. The gains made by the use of intelligent observation at least matched the concessions due to advancing years.

Lasker being Lasker, there was inevitably a certain amount of mischief-making from poor positions at New York, but we shall not dwell on this aspect. Rather, we look at a superlative piece of chess judo against Alekhine, where Lasker uses the momentum of his opponent's attack to bring about its downfall. Lasker advances his bishop, then on the next move retreats it to its original square; Alekhine meanwhile has been induced to advance a pawn which may never retreat again. The punishment is swift.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 ♘bd7

Probably played with the intention of entering the Cambridge Springs Variation if White played 5 ♗g5; Lasker's game as Black with his namesake Edward Lasker continued 5...c6 6 e3 ♕a5!? (more aggressive than the standard 6...♗e7) 7 ♘d2 ♗b4 8 ♕c2 ♘e4 9 ♘dxe4 dxe4 10 ♗f4 0-0 11 ♗e2 e5 12 dxe5 ♘xe5 13 0-0 ♗xc3 14 ♕xc3 ♕xc3 15 bxc3 ♖e8 and Emanuel later won the endgame.

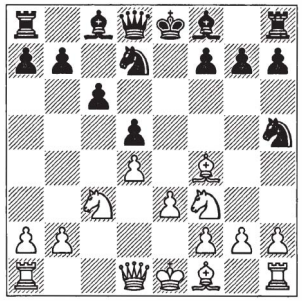
Nowadays, the Semi-Slav with 4...c6 is a popular option, and if 5 ♗g5, then 5...dxc4!? 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5, the wildly complicated Botvinnik Variation. The closest approach at New York was Janowski-Tartakower, which continued 5...h6 6 ♗h4 (6 ♗xf6 is normal) 6...dxc4 7 e3?! (too slow; 7 e4 is unclear) 7...b5 8 ♗e2 ♘bd7 9 a4 ♕b6 10 0-0 ♗b4 and Black had gained a solid extra pawn.

5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♗f4

In *The Queen's Gambit Declined: 5 ♗f4!*, I briefly discussed this move-order, and suggested 6 ♕c2 c6 7 g3!?. The problem with an early ♗f4 here is that Black has not yet committed his king's bishop, and might well be able to find it a more aggressive square than e7.

6...c6 7 e3 ♘h5! *(D)*

W



Excellent timing by Lasker. Forcing this exchange is nothing special if Black has already played ...♗e7, but the fact that Black will still have the option of playing ...♗d6 without loss of tempo makes a difference.

8 ♗d3?!

In the tournament book, Alekhine recommended 8 ♗e5, with the idea of provoking 8...f6?!. The simple 8...♘xe5 9 dxe5 g6 is satisfactory for Black however.

8 ♗g3 is the natural and obvious move, and after, for example, 8...g6 9 ♗d3 ♘xg3 10 hxg3 ♗g7 Black has a reasonable enough game. *ECO* then suggests that White can aim for a minority attack on the queenside with 11

b4. Whether or not one agrees with *ECO* that White is slightly better, it is indisputable that the minority attack has better chances of success when the d-pawn is securely protected than when the e3-pawn has veered off to f4.

8...♘xf4 9 exf4 ♗d6

Black must react vigorously in this type of position, since, as Rubinstein showed, White can gain considerable pressure if allowed to consolidate. Thus 9...♗e7?! 10 0-0 should favour White; the grip the pawns provide on the central dark squares fully compensate for the surrender of the dark-squared bishop, and the plan would be to extend the grip on the dark squares with ♘e5, g3, h4, ♖e1, etc. Once the 'Rubinstein bind' has been achieved, Black has problems.

9...♕e7+ 10 ♔f1! leaves Black in a tangle on the e-file. 10...♕f6 11 ♕e2+ ♗e7 12 ♖e1 ♘b6 13 h3 ♗d7 14 g4 ♘c8 15 f5 will force Black to play accurately to survive. The defence is not a prospectless chore, however, as Black has assets for the long term if he can hold his game together for a few moves. Not many players would want to take the task on.

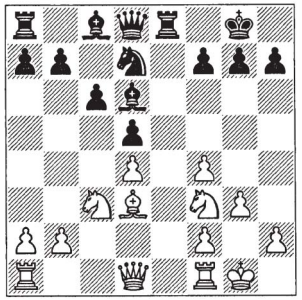
10 g3?!

This allows Black to complete his development in safety. Alekhine suggested 10 ♘e5, giving 10...♕h4 11 g3 ♕h3 12 ♕c2 in the tournament book. The queen manoeuvre looks suspiciously decentralizing however, and White will be happy enough castling queenside now that Black has spent a lot of time preventing him from castling kingside.

There is no swift path to equality after 10 ♘e5, but Black has reasonable long-term prospects if he buckles down to defence with 10...0-0 11 0-0 g6 followed by ...♖e8 and ...♘f8. It is a curious paradox that the safest pawn formation in front of the king involves weakening himself on the dark squares, on which White is hoping to create his bind. The point is, however, that White can only *occupy* the dark squares; his *lines of attack* are along the light squares. Landing pawns on the light squares blocks these lines of attack. Black is well advised to build the barrier promptly; if 11...♖e8??, then 12 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 13 ♘xf7 ♕f6 14 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 15 ♕h5+, and White wins material.

10...0-0 11 0-0 ♖e8 *(D)*

W



12 ♕c2?!

White's play over the next few moves appears a little disjointed. Black's knight is coming to f8 anyway to protect h7, and *once h7 is adequately protected against attack, there is no point in attacking it.*

Instead of attempting the hopeless task of winning on the light squares, White should be concentrating on gaining ground on the dark squares, a more modest and more achievable task. 12 ♕b1 comes to mind, using the *temporary* weakness on h7 to gain a tempo for the preparation of b4. Then 12...♘f8 13 b4 ♗g4, and if 14 ♘e5, not 14...♗h5?! 15 b5 f6 16 bxc6! fxe5 17 cxb7 ♖b8 18 fxe5, when the pawns outweigh Black's extra piece. Instead, 14...♗xe5! 15 dxe5 (15 fxe5 ♕b6 wins the d4-pawn) leaves Black with a protected passed d-pawn, making a mockery of White's attempt to improve his pawn-structure.

So even 12 ♕b1?! must be abandoned. White has to keep a tight formation, concentrating on central security rather than on any ambitious plan of expansion on the queenside. 12 ♕d2 is a solid option, keeping an eye on both the b- and d-pawns. White then may challenge rooks on the e-file, leaving various possible plans for redeployment of his minor pieces. The option of ♘e5 will best be kept for when Black plays ...♗g4, while ♘h4 could be a useful response to ...f6. White could also think about the re-fianchetto of his bishop. The main battle lies ahead.

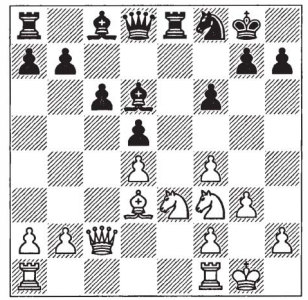
12...♘f8 13 ♘d1?!

Alekhine seems determined to play for a kingside attack, come what may. A few moves later, when it becomes clear that this plan will be fruitless, he is equally eager to attack on the queenside. All that results is that his pieces are drawn further out of position. There is, for example, no reason to think the knight will be better placed on e3 than on c3, and there is even less reason to spend a couple of moves getting it there. Challenging on the e-file with 13 ♖fe1 is still sensible.

13...f6 14 ♘e3 *(D)*

14...♗e6!

B



Taking the opportunity to bring the bishop round to its ideal defensive square f7. This, strangely, is the first of six consecutive moves by the two black bishops. The other bishop is going round to b6 to add pressure to the d-pawn. What is remarkable in this game is the way in which the defender runs circles round the attacker just by manoeuvring quietly in his own half. Possibly Alekhine did not appreciate the danger to his position until it was too late.

15 ♘h4?!

Another decentralizing move, which is not quite powerful enough to be called an attacking move. Any extra pressure on f5 is counteracted by the weakening of the d-pawn. Alekhine suggests 15 ♖fd1 ♗f7 16 ♘f5. Another approach is to play the knight on f3 to the other side of the board with 15 ♘d2!?, and then possibly ♘b3-c5.

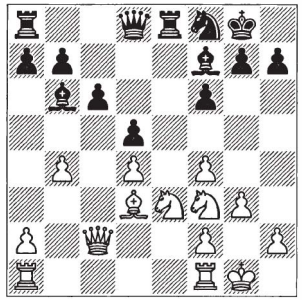
Black's slight weakness on the kingside is not serious enough to be destroyed by direct attack. White should remain content that Black's pieces are tied down by the need to protect h7, and should seek to create and exploit weaknesses elsewhere; the 'principle of two weaknesses'.

15...♗c7!

Black is quick to put pressure on the d-pawn.

16 b4 ♗b6 17 ♘f3 ♗f7 *(D)*

W



18 b5?

Tempting, but it quickly rebounds. 18 ♖fd1 ♗h5 19 ♗e2 (Alekhine) is sounder, but Black is comfortable.

18...♗h5!!

A beautiful piece of play. Black not only ignores White's queenside demonstration, he also 'wastes' a couple of moves on the kingside, allowing White to attack the bishop with apparent gain of tempo. White has no alternative but to drive the bishop away, but then an irreparable weakness appears on f4; the loss of tempo with ...♗h5 will at least partially be recovered by a hit on the exposed pawn on f4.

19 g4 ♗f7

Back again. This is impressive defensive manoeuvring by Lasker. In his last few moves he has apparently done very little, while Alekhine has apparently done a lot, but in reality has merely over-stretched himself.

20 bxc6 ♖c8

Even White's minority attack turns out to be a damp squib. White's pawn on d4 will turn out to be much weaker than Black's pawn on c6, and White could have done something more constructive with his time.

21 ♕b2 bxc6 22 f5

Necessary sooner or later, but now White no longer has any pressure against h7. White tries to make a virtue out of necessity by starting a pawn-storm. Black has an uncompromised kingside though, and enough play in the centre to ensure that the pawn-storm has no genuine chance of success.

22...♕d6 23 ♘g2

Otherwise ...♕f4 could be dangerous.

23...♗c7

A move of some symbolic importance. It is White's h2, and not Black's h7, that is under siege. The tables have been turned.

24 ♖fe1 h5 25 h3

White cannot allow the bishop to reach h5. If 25 g5 fxg5 26 ♘e5 ♘d7 27 f4 gxf4 28 ♘f3 (Alekhine), White has no immediate problems on the kingside, but has of course dropped two pawns. Black can strike up play in another sector with 28...c5.

25...♘h7

Another nice touch. The h7-square, on which White tried to focus his attack earlier, is now part of the route into the attack by Black's knight.

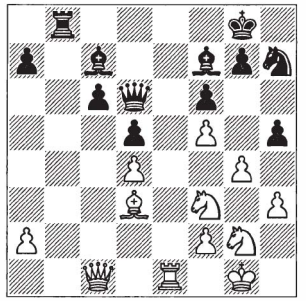
26 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 27 ♖e1 ♖b8

And here White's failed minority attack gives Black first use of the open lines on the queenside.

The obvious 27...♖xe1+?! 28 ♘gxe1 hxg4 29 hxg4 ♕f4 is unclear after 30 ♕b7! ♕xg4+ 31 ♔h1. White's pieces suddenly become properly coordinated for defence, and he has counterplay with his queen.

28 ♕c1 *(D)*

B



28...♘g5

Black is now on the attack.

29 ♘e5!?

29 ♘xg5 ♕h2+ 30 ♔f1 fxg5 31 ♘e3 (31 ♕xg5 ♖b2 mates) 31...♕xh3+ 32 ♔e2 hxg4 nets Black two pawns while still maintaining a strong attack. So Alekhine goes into cheapo mode.

29...fxe5

It turns out that Lasker could safely have snatched the piece (29...♘xh3+ 30 ♔f1 fxe5 31 dxe5 ♕b4 32 e6 ♗e8 33 f6 gxf6! 34 ♕h6 ♕e7), and maybe this would have been the most accurate line. It would also have been necessary though to calculate a few tactical points, and this takes time on the clock, which Lasker may not have had. The text-move is good enough; simpler but less forceful.

30 ♕xg5 e4 31 f6

The sort of move which is blitzed out in the time-scramble to avoid having to resign immediately.

31...g6

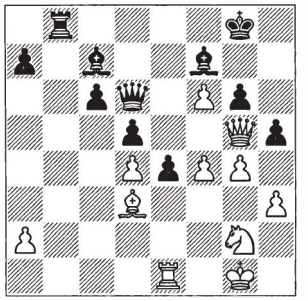
And not the greedy 31...♕h2+?? 32 ♔f1 ♕h1+ 33 ♔e2 exd3+ 34 ♔xd3 ♕xh3+ 35 ♘e3 ♔f8 36 ♕xg7+ ♔e8 37 ♔c2! (the Russian edition of the tournament book gives the illegal 37 ♘c2+; a printer's error rather than an annotator's slip?) 37...♗a5 38 ♘f5+ ♗xe1 39 ♘d6+ ♔d8 (39...♔d7 40 ♕xf7+ ♔xd6 41 ♕e7#) 40 ♘xf7+ ♔c7 41 ♘g5+ winning the queen. Black should not abandon his kingside like this unless he has a clear and decisive run of checks. If there is any hole in the net, there is always the danger of a swindle, with the wrong king escaping, and the wrong king getting snared.

Black's simplest would have been the straightforward 31...♕xf6, with a winning endgame in sight.

32 f4 *(D)*

Hoping to find time for gxh5. If now 32...exd3?, 33 gxh5; or 32...exf3? 33 ♖e5! followed by ♗xg6. So Black still has to find one more careful move.

B



32...hxg4!

Removing White's last threat.

33 ♗e2 gxh3 34 ♗h5 ♖b2 35 ♘h4 ♕xf4 36 ♕xf4 ♗xf4 0-1

Alekhine was one of the greatest attacking players in the history of the

game, combining immense tactical skills with a clear understanding of the development of modern theories of positional chess. It was not every player who could make beating off an Alekhine attack look so easy, but Lasker treated him with the brutal ease of, for example, Steinitz demolishing Zukertort, an unreconstructed tactician, in their 1886 match.

Game L9
Euwe – Lasker
Zurich 1934
Queen's Gambit Declined, Orthodox

After Moscow 1925 (Bogoljubow 15½/20; Lasker 14; Capablanca 13½, Marshall 12½, etc.), Lasker retired from tournament chess. He embarked on a series of simultaneous displays in the USA in the first few months of 1926, and gave several displays in the Scandinavian countries in the following year. His chess activities were, however, clearly winding down after that, with Whyld's tables (in *The Collected Games of Emanuel Lasker*) listing no displays, and of course no tournament chess, between February 1929 (Delft) and December 1932 (Riga and Königsberg). The economic slump may have meant that tempting offers would have been extremely thin on the ground, but Lasker was by now in his early sixties, and presumably more than happy to retire.

Sadly it was not to be. The scapegoating of the Jews for Germany's difficulties took a particularly vicious turn under the Nazis, and Lasker and his wife soon found themselves penniless, their property confiscated, and in exile. There was no alternative but to take up professional chess again, and in his very first game for over eight years, he showed that at sixty-five, and with no recent practice, he could successfully cross swords with the world's best. He beat Max Euwe, soon to become World Champion, with a classic display of defensive grit. Despite this excellent start, it has to be admitted that Lasker's overall result was a worthy veteran's performance rather than any outstanding triumph. He was severely dealt with by Ståhlberg, Bogoljubow, Nimzowitsch (in his last tournament) and Alekhine (in a famous miniature, the only game Alekhine ever won from Lasker), and his high percentage was accounted for by making a clean sweep of the Swiss tail-enders. Alekhine scored 13/15, Euwe and Flohr 12, Bogoljubow 11½, with Lasker finishing a distant fifth with 10.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♘bd7 5 e3 c6 6 ♘f3 ♗e7

While neither player could be said to have made any real mistake as yet, this system has, to the modern player, an old-fashioned feel to it. The 'orthodox system' was popular during the 1920s and 1930s, but is generally seen these days only in conjunction with a queenside fianchetto (1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 e3 0-0 6 ♘f3 h6 7 ♗h4 b6, the Tartakower system), rather than in its original form with ...c6 and ...♘bd7. Black is very solid, if uncomfortably passive, and can look forward to freeing his game by offering the exchange of dark-squared bishops by ...dxc4 followed by ...♘d5.

7 ♕c2 0-0 *(D)*

Possibly one might consider that Black has already been caught in a slight move-order trick, since if he had played 5...♗e7 and 6...0-0 (instead of 5...c6 and 6...♗e7), then 7...c5!? would be a good reply to 7 ♕c2. Indeed, Lasker would have had unhappy memories of this as White, having lost the 10th game of his 1921 match with Capablanca in this system (Supplementary Game L9.1). Lasker's loss was not however due to the opening; he misplayed the middlegame from a good position.

W

8 a3

A waiting move, based on the notion that since 8 ♗d3 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 costs White a tempo, it is better for White to manoeuvre behind the lines a bit in order to force Black to show his hand. White's queenside is a little more secure with the pawn on a3 rather than on a2.

White also has two good non-committal rook moves (8 ♖c1 and 8 ♖d1) which both offer chances for a slight edge. There is also an extremely committal rook move, 8 0-0-0!?, by which White reckons that his superior mobility means that he will set his kingside attack in motion before Black can land any punches on the queenside. Psakhis-Agzamov, Erevan 1982 continued 8...♖e8 9 h4 a6 10 ♗d3 dxc4 11 ♗xc4 ♘d5 (11...b5!?, *ECO*, is critical) 12 ♔b1 ♘xc3+ 13 ♕xc3 b5 14 ♗d3 ♗b7 15 ♘e5 ±. Modern players are generally happier than those of the 1920s and 1930s with the idea of castling queenside in the Queen's Gambit. Rubinstein, however, won two famous games (versus Teichmann, Vienna 1908, and Znosko-Borovsky, St Petersburg 1909) with 8 0-0-0 where Black had played ...b6 rather than ...c6.

8...♖e8 9 ♖c1 dxc4

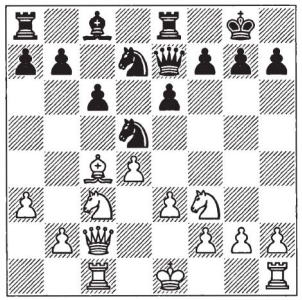
Abandoning the 'battle of the tempo'. From the position after 9...a6, *ECO* cites the game Hort-Toth, Biel 1982, which continued 10 h3 h6 11 ♗h4 dxc4 12 ♗xc4 b5 (if 12...♘d5 13 ♗xe7 ♕xe7, the various moves of the rooks' pawns favour White; an interesting contrast between the roles of attacker and defender – White's a3- and h3-pawns cover useful squares and give the castled king a flight-square, whereas ...a6 weakens Black's queenside dark squares, and ...h6 weakens Black's kingside light squares) 13 ♗a2 c5 14 dxc5 ♘xc5 15 0-0 ♗b7 16

♖fd1 with an obvious advantage in mobility to White.

10 ♗xc4 ♘d5 11 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 *(D)*

Lasker once had a dreadful experience with 11...♖xe7? (with White's pawn on a2 rather than on a3; White had in effect substituted ♗d3 for a3). Capablanca ground him down in the 11th game of their 1921 match with almost effortless ease (Supplementary Game L9.2). Lasker gives a much better display against Euwe. He ensures here that although his pieces remain constricted for a while, they are still well coordinated; no elaborate doublings of the rooks on the closed c-file, or knight retreats to b6 or g6, as in the Capablanca game; instead a gradual freeing of the pieces.

W



12 ♘e4

Black's formation is a natural and thematic one, and White has been playing natural enough moves, but as so often the *precise* formation of pieces determines the availability of attacking and defensive plans. For example, some of the Alekhine-Capablanca games in 1927 (with Alekhine as White) reached the diagram position, but with a3 and ♕c2 omitted for White, and ...♖e8 omitted for Black. The absence of the pawn from a3 means that ...♕b4+ is possible, but the 6th game showed that the immediate queen check does not solve Black's problems: 11 ♘e4 ♕b4+ 12 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 13 ♔xd2 ♖d8 14 ♖hd1 ♘5f6 15 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 16 ♗b3 ♔f8 17 ♔e2 and Black still had not freed his queenside. Later in the match, Capablanca inserted 11...♘5f6 12 ♘g3 before playing 12...♕b4+, but still did not succeed in equalizing: 13 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 14 ♔xd2 ♖d8 15 ♖hd1 b6 16 e4 ♗b7 17 e5 ♘e8 18 ♔e3 with a significant spatial advantage for White, Alekhine-Capablanca, Buenos Aires Wch (30) 1927. Later analysis by Taimanov suggested that Black could equalize with 14...c5 15 dxc5 ♘xc5 16 ♔e2 ♗d7 17 ♘e5 ♖fd8, though perhaps White could try 16 ♖hd1!?.

The implication is that, provided White has not already played ♕c2 (when ♕d1-c2-d2 is an obvious loss of tempo), White does not have to worry too much about the queen exchange, and may happily omit a3. If, however, White plays an early ♕c2, it is necessary to have played a3 as well before embarking on ♘e4.

We must resist the temptation to take too great a theoretical detour around the intricacies of the Orthodox Queen's Gambit, but the reader is referred to Game L10.2, Alekhine-Lasker, Zurich 1934, which was theoretically important at the time.

12...♘5f6 13 ♘g3 c5!?

Lasker cannot, as in the Alekhine-Lasker game (Supplementary Game L10.2), play 13...e5?, since the unavailability of ...♕b4+, and the lack of rook cover for f7, tell heavily against him. 14 ♘f5 ♕f8 15 ♘g5 is immediately crushing.

ECO gives a reference neither for this position, nor for this game, surprisingly for an encounter between two world champions. After 12 ♘e4, it notes only 12...b6 (instead of Lasker's 12...♘5f6), and gives 13 ♗a2 ♗b7 14 ♗b1, without supplying a game reference.

Lasker takes a more classically Steinitzian approach, arguing that in a constricted position, unnecessary pawn moves should be avoided, as they create potential weaknesses. The move ...b6 does not challenge White's pawn-centre, but merely provides a development square for the bishop, at the cost of conceding some control of the light squares. Black cannot do without pawn moves altogether, as he would be crushed; think of Capablanca-Lasker, Game L9.2! The move he chooses counter-attacks White's pawn-centre, and does so without leaving a significant weakness on any central or near-central square (whereas ...e5 leaves f5 and the a2-g8 diagonal weak). Having had a nibble at the white centre, Lasker then manoeuvres his pieces behind the lines, avoiding ...b6.

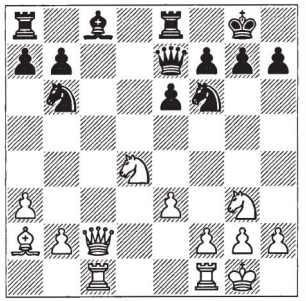
14 0-0 cxd4 15 ♘xd4 ♘b6 16 ♗a2 *(D)*

Varnusz, citing Alekhine and Ståhlberg, gives 16 ♗b5 ♗d7 17 ♕c7 ♗xb5 18 ♘xb5 ♘bd5 19 ♕xe7 ♖xe7 as possibly being slightly better for White.

16...♖b8!

A 'mysterious rook move', whose purpose is to protect the b-pawn, so that Black can play ...♗d7 without having to worry about ♕c7. Once Black has played ...♗d7, he is then free to challenge the c-file, while keeping d5 open as a defensive outpost. The pseudo-active 16...e5? is exactly the sort of move that Black must avoid, since having exchanged his c-pawn, the push of the e-pawn leaves a complex of light squares (notably d5, f5 and f7) desperately weak. After 17 ♘df5 ♗xf5 18 ♘xf5 ♕f8 19 ♕c7 Black is in deep trouble.

B



17 e4

17 ♕d2!? (Alekhine, Ståhlberg) has been suggested, with the idea of ♕a5, taking advantage of the rook's absence from a8 to try to force some awkward regrouping. Black would then have to try, as in the game, 17...♖d8, and if 18 ♕a5, then 18...♖a8, or 18 ♖fd1 ♗d7 (18...e5?? 19 ♘c6!) 19 ♕a5 ♖a8, and, while White remains more active, Black has his essential weaknesses covered; if 20 ♖c7?, then 20...♕d6 21 ♖xb7? e5.

17...♖d8

Again Black resists the temptation of playing 17...e5?. Leaving the e-pawn where it is naturally involves the risk that White can gain space with e5. Black can do nothing about this, other than to prepare his defences. The

knight on f6 comes back to e8 to cover his weakness on d6, while the other knight prepares to jump to d5 if given the opportunity.

18 ♖fd1 ♗d7 19 e5

Maybe White is starting to overpress a little. Alekhine and Ståhlberg give 19 ♕c7 ♖dc8 20 ♕e5 ± (not 20...♖xc1?? 21 ♕xb8+), but 19...♘e8 is perhaps a tighter defence.

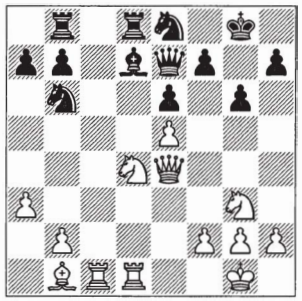
19...♘e8 20 ♗b1 g6

A necessary concession. Black operates on the basis that so long as he remains well centralized, with coordinated pieces, he can cover the sore dark squares.

21 ♕e4 *(D)*

At first I was inclined to question this move, preferring 21 ♘e4, but then 21...♖bc8 would have left the queen without any particularly effective square to go to. If, for example, 22 ♕e2, then 22...♗a4 23 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 (23...♗xd1? 24 ♖xd8 ♗xe2 25 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 26 ♘f6+) 24 ♖e1 ♘d5 and Black's position remains mightily solid. White is not yet in trouble, but he has to be careful about the various squares on the c- and d-files which lack effective pawn protection, precisely because he has aimed for the attack with e4-e5.

B



21...♗a4!

Perhaps the move of the game. Black, apparently under pressure, quite happily invests in a couple of moves with his bishop in order to force a slight weakening of White's pawn-structure. Clarke once wrote of Petrosian that "if Petrosian has done nothing, his opponent has done less than nothing", and this is precisely the impression that Lasker gives in this game. Euwe's pawn weaknesses in the next couple of moves may not appear all that significant at first, but as play continues, the contrast between the solidity of Black's position and the looseness of White's becomes ever clearer.

There is an obvious comparison to be made with Lasker's win against Alekhine at New York 1924 (Game L8) and his ...♗f7-h5-f7 manoeuvre to draw forward Alekhine's kingside pawns.

22 b3?

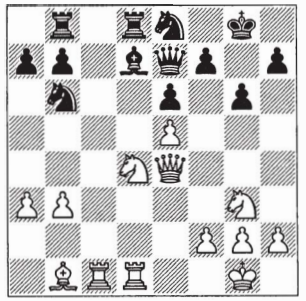
White should have left this pawn where it was. In later years Euwe was to popularize and develop Steinitz's positional theories, in classic works such as *The Development of Chess Style* and *Judgement and Planning in Chess*. Here though he plays a thoroughly anti-Steinitzian move, creating all sorts of weaknesses for himself on the queenside. Lasker plays superbly to take over the initiative.

The correct move is 22 ♖e1, which notionally cedes control of the d-file, although there is little that Black can really achieve here, since 22...♕d7 23 ♘de2!? (23 ♘f3 ♗c6 24 ♕f4 ♗xf3 25 ♕xf3 ♕d5 allows Black favourable simplification) leaves Black under pressure on the kingside. White's basic idea is ♕f4 followed by ♘c3-e4.

Black probably does better to maintain the queen on its strong defensive square on e7, and challenge the c-file with 22...♖bc8. After 23 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 24 ♗a2, White probably stands a little better, but Black can try 24...♗c6 25 ♘xc6 bxc6!, followed if appropriate by ...♘d5, much as in the game, though with the exception that White has not weakened his queenside pawns.

22...♗d7 *(D)*

W



23 a4

It turns out that White hasn't gained any time after all; two weakening pawn moves versus two bishop moves to get back to its original square.

23...♘d5

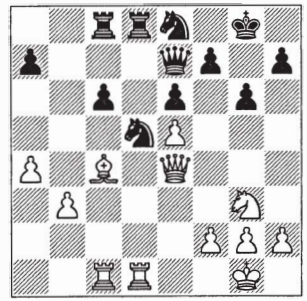
Far more impressive than it would have been a couple of moves earlier. White's b4-square is now weak as a result of the a4 move, while the knight cannot easily be challenged on d5 as a result of the b3 move.

24 ♗d3

White at least tries to remedy the second of these deficiencies.

24...♖bc8 25 ♗c4 ♗c6 26 ♘xc6 bxc6! *(D)*

W



Black's position is rock solid. There is nothing that White can attack. Nominally White has the greater space, backed up by his pawn on e5, but it is very difficult to see how he is going to use that extra space. Black's knight on d5 is a tower of strength, which also helps to fix some nasty weaknesses on the dark squares on White's side of the board, while Black's knight on e8 helps neutralize the weaknesses on d6 and f6. The best that White can hope for with his bishop is to exchange it for Black's knight on d5, but this will give Black a powerful passed pawn. Assuming that White does not want to exchange on d5, Black's plan will be to take control of the d-file by doubling rooks and moving the knight away, but only to a distance from which it can quickly return to d5. Once Black has the d-file under his control, White's position is in peril, since the weakened dark squares on the queenside will provide dominating outposts for the invading black forces.

The rest of the game shows Black successfully putting his plan into effect, although naturally there are several tactical details which have to be taken into account. In the game Black

even has to sacrifice/exchange his queen for mixed forces to keep the initiative going.

27 ♖d3?!

An optimistic move. One cannot attack a position without weaknesses. It is true that Black's kingside pawn-structure is not perfect, and White is thereby encouraged to generate some pressure on the pawns on the light squares. Black, though, has enough pieces in the area to keep everything covered for the time being, meaning that White has to take time to bring his pieces across to the kingside, and advance pawns there, in the attempt to provoke further weaknesses. In the time that it takes to do this, Black can set his counter-attack in motion without opposition.

27 ♗xd5!? would have been a more imaginative solution, straightening out Black's pawn-structure, and indeed giving him a passed pawn, but leaving White with the better minor piece. After 27...cxd5 28 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 29 ♕d3, White can aim for a structure with knight on d4 and pawn on f4, which is very solid whether queens are on or off the board. 27...exd5 28 ♕e3 would be an interesting try to unbalance the position, but taking a pawn away from the kingside will make it easier for White to launch an attack against the black king.

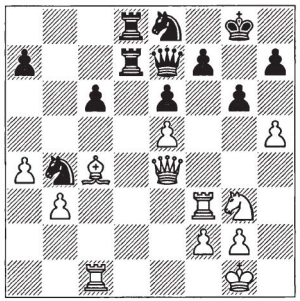
As so often in chess, the balance of the game starts to swing seriously away from White when he fails to appreciate the need to switch from attack to defence.

27...♘b4 28 ♖f3

White is dreaming if he thinks that Black's position will collapse on f7, especially as Black's next move simultaneously brings another piece to the defence of this square and develops Black's counterplay on the d-file.

28...♖c7 29 h4 ♖cd7 30 h5 *(D)*

B



30...♕g5

An unusual twist to the story: Black increases the pressure on the dark squares by playing to a dark square on the *king*side, which White had mapped out as his own province. This might at first suggest that White's 30 h5 was wrong, but how else would he have saved the h-pawn, given that ...♖d4 was threatened? Maybe White could have tried 30 ♖f4, but this would give the impression of a player tying himself in knots rather than attacking.

31 ♖e1 ♖d4 32 hxg6 hxg6

I am sure that Lasker would not have been in the least interested in calculating in depth whether Black's position is defensible after 32...♖xe4? 33 gxf7+ ♔f8 34 ♘xe4 (and if 34...♕xe5, 35 fxe8♕+ ♔xe8 36 ♘f6+). All that matters in practical terms is that White has a really dangerous attack in return for no significant material cost, whereas the simple recapture on g6 leaves Black's positional advantages intact.

33 ♕e2?!

Hoping to have time to play ♘e4 and ♘f6+, but Black refutes this plan easily enough.

Here or on move 31 White should have considered offering the exchange of queens (31 or 33 ♕e3; 31 ♕f4) with a complicated endgame in prospect. With three different positions to analyse, it would be laborious to go through all the relevant variations. The important general point to note is that Black's weakness on f6 is actually far more significant with the queens off the board than with the queens on, in that Black will find it extremely difficult to get the knight on e8 into play. To get round this problem, the most efficient way for Black to proceed would be to bring a rook to White's side of the board, and then close the valve on the d-file with ...♘d5, providing extra cover for f6; for example, 33 ♕e3 ♕xe3 34 ♖exe3 ♘d5 ∓. White's position would then be only slightly inferior, although it is surprising how often a small detail in pawn-structure makes a large difference to the assessment of the position; White would, for example, be in deep trouble if the black pawn were on g7 rather than on g6.

33...♖d2 34 ♕f1?! *(D)*

Still 34 ♕e3 is advisable.

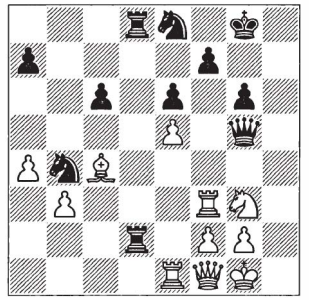
Has White cunningly lured the black rook to a bad square, so that ♘e4 comes with gain of tempo? Or has the old fox deliberately tempted his opponent into falsely thinking he could set a vicious trap?

It soon turns out that Lasker has outwitted his opponent.

34...♘c2! 35 ♘e4

Forced now.

B



35...♕xe5! 36 ♘f6+ ♕xf6 37 ♖xf6 ♘xf6

Black has a full material equivalent for the queen, so the question of sacrifice does not really come into it.

As so often, the strategic character of the game radically changes when a queen is exchanged for a mixed assortment; at the very least Black does not have to worry about f6 being weak any more. In general, the queen is at her best in chaotic positions where there are scattered and isolated weaknesses that can be attacked and picked off, and where rapid mobility is at a premium. This might be particularly important if there is also an exposed king for the queen to harass.

In more stable positions however, the accumulation of lesser forces is more likely to be dominant, particularly if there are central outposts to be seized, and if the characteristic weaknesses are pawns or squares (such as White's f2 here) which may come under the combined attack of several pieces. In such positions the queen is a poor defender.

A similar logic may also be noted with regard to exchange sacrifices (with maybe a pawn or two in compensation)

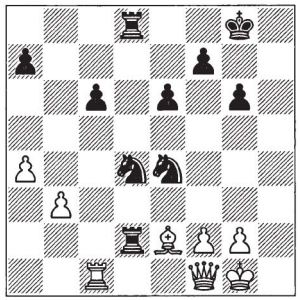
which, as we shall see later, were a speciality of Petrosian's. Rooks are the favoured pieces in open play, but if the player who has sacrificed the exchange has a basically solid position, with outposts in his possession and targets to aim for, the lesser forces might well come out on top.

38 ♖c1?

White's position is so unpromising after this move that he should have considered returning the queen with 38 ♖e2! ♖d1 39 ♖xc2. Black will of course be a pawn up, but since his pawn-majority is on the side of the board controlled by the defending king, it will be difficult for Black to create a viable passed pawn out of his majority. Furthermore, Black's c-pawn is weak, noticeably so for the first time in the game, and if it falls White will have a highly mobile queenside pawn-majority. Finally the position is now sufficiently open, with fast-moving play covering both sides of the board, to an extent that the bishop has become a better minor piece than the knight. Black must still be better, but White can resist. Although Lasker has played with impeccable logic, and although several of Euwe's moves have given a doubtful impression, the decisive mistake comes surprisingly late in the game. This is not unusual in positions where the defender wins. When the defence goes wrong, it often takes just a single mistake for the position to crash. When a successful defence is to yield more than half a point, it is generally as a result of a gradual slippage by the attacker, a series of slightly sub-optimal moves with cumulative effect. In this particular game, Euwe got into trouble by straining too hard for an attack, but his final mistake, once he had lost the initiative, was to defend purely passively rather than seek a counter-initiative.

38...♘e4 39 ♗e2 ♘d4 *(D)*

W



I have to admit saving the diagram up for a couple of moves, avoiding a critical position, just for the aesthetic pleasure of showing a picture of complete domination by the knights. The next few moves show the horses leaping all over the place. Little commentary is needed.

40 ♗f3 ♘xf2 41 ♕c4 ♘d3 42 ♖f1 ♘e5 43 ♕b4 ♘exf3+

Now the white king becomes fatally exposed.

44 gxf3 ♘e2+ 45 ♔h2 ♘f4+ 46 ♔h1

46 ♔g3 g5 47 ♖g1 (47 ♔g4 ♖g2#) 47...♘e2+ is hopeless for White.

46...♖2d4 47 ♕e7 ♔g7 48 ♕c7 ♖8d5 49 ♖e1 ♖g5 50 ♕xc6 ♖d8 0-1

This is an impressive game by any standards, particularly given the calibre of Lasker's opponent. It becomes astonishing when one considers that this was Lasker's first tournament game for eight years and seven months.

Supplementary Games

Game L9.1
Lasker – Capablanca
Havana Wch (10) 1921
Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 e3 0-0 6 ♘f3 ♘bd7 7 ♕c2 c5 8 ♖d1 ♕a5 9 ♗d3

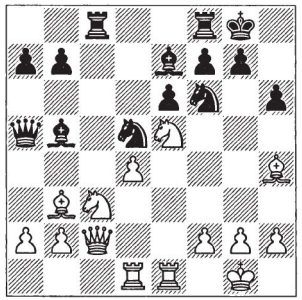
9 cxd5!?.

9...h6 10 ♗h4 cxd4 11 exd4 dxc4 12 ♗xc4 ♘b6 13 ♗b3 ♗d7 14 0-0 ♖ac8 15 ♘e5

15 ♕e2!? Alekhine.

15...♗b5 16 ♖fe1 ♘bd5 *(D)*

W



So far, White is doing quite well, but Lasker now completely mishandled the exchanges of minor pieces with...

17 ♗xd5?

...and Capablanca won famously after...

17...♘xd5 18 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 19 ♕b3 ♗c6!

An important defensive move in the Euwe-Lasker game as well.

20 ♘xc6 bxc6

Again, compare this with the Euwe-Lasker game. The main thematic difference in pawn-structure is that Euwe had a pawn on e5 rather than on d4, but Black's control of d5 still was still a vital feature of the position.

21 ♖e5 ♕b6 22 ♕c2

22 ♕xb6 is also unappealing.

22...♖fd8 23 ♘e2 ♖d5 24 ♖xd5 cxd5 25 ♕d2 ♘f5 26 b3 h5 27 h3 h4 28 ♕d3 ♖c6 29 ♔f1 g6 30 ♕b1 ♕b4 31 ♔g1 a5 32 ♕b2 a4 33 ♕d2 ♕xd2 34 ♖xd2 axb3 35 axb3 ♖b6 36 ♖d3 ♖a6 37 g4 hxg3 38 fxg3 ♖a2 39 ♘c3 ♖c2 40 ♘d1 ♘e7 41 ♘c3 ♖c1+ 42 ♔f2 ♘c6 43 ♘d1 ♖b1 44 ♔e2 ♖xb3 45 ♔e3 ♖b4 46 ♘c3 ♘e7 47 ♘e2 ♘f5+ 48 ♔f2 g5 49 g4 ♘d6 50 ♘g1 ♘e4+ 51 ♔f1 ♖b1+ 52 ♔g2 ♖b2+ 53 ♔f1 ♖f2+ 54 ♔e1 ♖a2 55 ♔f1 ♔g7 56 ♖e3 ♔g6 57 ♖d3 f6 58 ♖e3 ♔f7 59 ♖d3 ♔e7 60 ♖e3 ♔d6 61 ♖d3 ♖f2+ 62 ♔e1 ♖g2 63 ♔f1 ♖a2 64 ♖e3 e5 65 ♖d3 exd4 66 ♖xd4 ♔c5 67 ♖d1 d4 68 ♖c1+ ♔d5 0-1

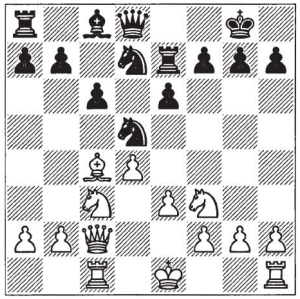
A well-known Capablanca endgame. In the diagram position, Réti (in *Modern Ideas in Chess*) lavishly praised some analysis by Breyer which recommended 17 ♗xf6 (!! – Réti) 17...♗xf6 (17...♘xf6? 18 ♘g6! ♖fe8 19 ♖xe6 fxe6 20 ♗xe6+ ♔h7 21 ♘f8++ ♔h8 22 ♕h7+ ♘xh7 23 ♘g6#) 18 ♗xd5 exd5, and White may consider either 19 ♘g4 (Breyer; subsequent analysis suggested then 19...♗g5 20 f4 ♗h4! 21 g3 ♗d8 22 ♕f5 ♖xc3! with unclear play) or 19 ♕f5. Marović (in *Play the Queen's Gambit*) suggests that 19...♗c6 is good enough for equality after the queen move (e.g. 20 ♘g4 ♗g5 21 f4 g6, or 20 ♘d7?! ♗xd7 21 ♕xd7 ♖fd8). But White surely has no need to panic over Black's ineffective bishop-pair; quiet but firm play with 20 ♖e3 should keep an advantage. To

the modern player, the remarkable feature of Breyer's analysis of 17 ♗xf6 is that the move should ever have been thought of as anything out of the ordinary. White's natural course of action is surely to stabilize the pawn-structure in the centre, and to ensure that Black too has to defend an isolated queen's pawn; ♗xf6, eliminating one of the defenders of d5, is a logical part of this plan. Indeed, the ♗xf6 exchange is now standard in various Queen's Gambit positions (for example, 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 e3 h6 7 ♗h4 b6 8 ♗e2 ♗b7 9 ♗xf6!? ♗xf6 10 cxd5 exd5), the usual motivation being to fix a black pawn on d5. An interesting example of how our understanding of positional play has evolved over the generations.

Game L9.2
Capablanca – Lasker
Havana Wch (11) 1921
Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 c4 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♘bd7 5 e3 ♗e7 6 ♘c3 0-0 7 ♖c1 ♖e8 8 ♕c2 c6 9 ♗d3 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♘d5 11 ♗xe7 ♖xe7? *(D)*

W



Black's recapture is passive and disharmonious, and Capablanca soon builds up a very strong position. It is rare to be able to give an example where Lasker defends weakly; he had probably not psychologically recovered from his loss in the previous game. Games such as this present a useful reminder that the defence does not play itself, and that if the defender is not alert a small disadvantage may soon snowball into defeat.

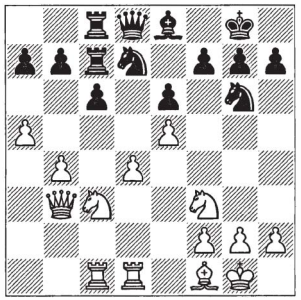
12 0-0 ♘f8 13 ♖fd1 ♗d7 14 e4

Stage 1. Capablanca, faced with poorly coordinated opposition, has an absolutely free hand to expand in the centre and on the queenside. He then sets about creating a knight outpost on d6 by playing e4-e5; Black's corresponding outpost on d5 will be of much less significance as it does not bite into White's position.

14...♘b6 15 ♗f1 ♖c8 16 b4 ♗e8 17 ♕b3 ♖ec7 18 a4 ♘g6 19 a5 ♘d7 20 e5 *(D)*

He is now ready to invade on d6.

B



20...b6 21 ♘e4 ♖b8 22 ♕c3 ♘f4 23 ♘d6 ♘d5 24 ♕a3 f6

Stage 2. Lasker cannot allow the knight to remain on d6, as otherwise

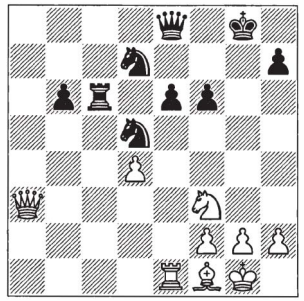
he gets strangled. He therefore undermines the knight's pawn support, and gives himself some temporary freedom, but only at the cost of creating permanent weaknesses.

25 ♘xe8 ♕xe8 26 exf6 gxf6 27 b5

Stage 3. Capablanca still has the initiative on the queenside, and sets about forcing further pawn exchanges, with the aim of fixing an isolated pawn.

27...♖bc8 28 bxc6 ♖xc6 29 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 30 axb6 axb6 31 ♖e1 *(D)*

B



Stage 4. Although by now Lasker's pieces are no less active than Capablanca's, his pawns on b6, e6 and f6 are all dreadfully weak and open to attack by pieces, whereas Capablanca's pawns are totally safe. The next few moves see Capablanca purposefully building an attack against these pawns, again forcing Lasker on the defensive.

31...♕c8 32 ♘d2 ♘f8 33 ♘e4 ♕d8 34 h4

So that ...f5 may be met by ♘g5.

34...♖c7 35 ♕b3 ♖g7 36 g3 ♖a7 37 ♗c4

Now 38 ♗xd5 exd5 39 ♕xd5+ ♕xd5 40 ♘xf6+ is a direct threat. All three of Black's pawns on the third rank are under pressure.

37...♖a5 38 ♘c3 ♘xc3 39 ♕xc3 ♔f7 40 ♕e3 ♕d6 41 ♕e4

Stage 5. Now that Black's pieces are all in passive positions, White can break through along various open lines which remain undefended. The attack is decisive.

41...♖a4 42 ♕b7+ ♔g6 43 ♕c8 ♕b4 44 ♖c1 ♕e7 45 ♗d3+ ♔h6 46 ♖c7 ♖a1+ 47 ♔g2 ♕d6 48 ♕xf8+ 1-0

Game L9.3
Alekhine – Lasker
Zurich 1934
Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 ♗e7 5 ♗g5 ♘bd7 6 e3 0-0 7 ♖c1 c6 8 ♗d3 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 ♘d5 10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 11 ♘e4 ♘5f6 12 ♘g3

Current theory suggests that White keeps a slight advantage by 12 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 13 0-0 e5 14 e4 exd4 15 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 16 ♘xd4; for example, 16...♘e5 17 ♗b3 ♖d8 18 ♖fd1 ♗d7 19 ♖c5 ♘g6 20 ♖c2 ♔f8 21 f3 ♔e8 22 ♔f2 ♘f8 23 f4, Petrosian-Portisch, Santa Monica 1966. In the time that Black has taken to complete his development, White has been able to set in motion a kingside pawn-roller. However, Black eventually managed to hold the game.

12...e5!?

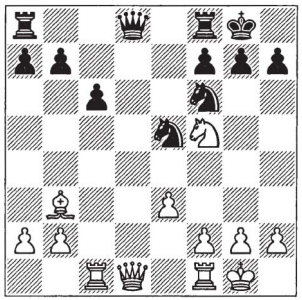
For 12...♕b4+, see the note to White's 12th move in the main game. Lasker's idea is to keep ...♕b4+ in reserve, as an answer to 13 ♘f5!?.

13 0-0 exd4 14 ♘f5 ♕d8 15 ♘3xd4 ♘e5 16 ♗b3 ♗xf5 17 ♘xf5 *(D)*

17...♕b6?

Lasker has found an interesting freeing manoeuvre in the opening,

B



which advances theory beyond the Alekhine-Capablanca match games, but the text-move is alas a serious defensive error, which allows Alekhine to set up one of his famed lightning kingside attacks. A couple of years later, the correct line was found for Black: 17...g6! 18 ♕d4 (if 18 ♘d6, then 18...♕e7 and the knight is unsustainable on d6) 18...♕xd4 19 ♘xd4 ♖ad8 = Euwe-Flohr, Nottingham 1936.

18 ♕d6 ♘ed7 19 ♖fd1 ♖ad8 20 ♕g3 g6 21 ♕g5 ♔h8 22 ♘d6 ♔g7 23 e4 ♘g8 24 ♖d3 f6 25 ♘f5+ ♔h8 26 ♕xg6 1-0

This is instructive, not least because it shows how very thin the line can be between a successful defence and catastrophe. This was the only game Alekhine ever won against Lasker.

Game L10
Spielmann – Lasker
Moscow 1935
Scotch Four Knights

When one takes into account the frailties of human biology, there is a strong case for arguing that Lasker's most remarkable performance was not one of his many first prizes in major international tournaments, nor one of his many match victories, but actually a relatively modest third at Moscow 1935. The point was that Lasker was 66 at the time! And in nineteen games he did not lose once! This was not a weak tournament either; the Soviet school of chess was already producing accomplished master- and grandmaster-strength players on a substantial scale, leaving little room for easy games. Sometimes it is a matter of good fortune as well as skill when a player goes through a tournament of this length and strength unbeaten (and Botvinnik, joint winner with Flohr, lost twice). Good defenders will, however, create their own luck, both by sheer tenacity and by giving their opponents ample opportunity to go wrong. Lasker indeed had a substantial slice of this good fortune in his first round game against Kan when, in a position which had suddenly gone sour, he successfully offered a 'fifty percenter'. This game is given as a supplementary, with rather more notes than is usual for a supplementary, since Kan too had a chance to stay in the game, but missed it. In the various sets of notes I have seen to the game, none has tried to improve on Kan's play towards the end of the game.

Evidently resourceful defensive play has a depressing effect on the annotator as well as the opponent.

Nine days later, Lasker had another desperate but less well known save against Spielmann; draws tend to be forgotten. Spielmann, renowned for his attacking skills, should have been in his element, chasing Lasker's king around, and ultimately winning material, in a queenless middlegame, but Lasker once again showed the depths of resource he could bring to defending an unpromising position.

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3

A steady enough move, but Black should have enough resources to equalize. The Mieses Variation, 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♕e7 7 ♕e2, leads to livelier play.

5...♗b4 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♗d3 d5 8 exd5 ♕e7+?!

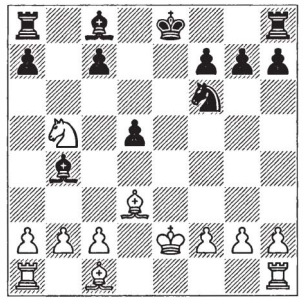
This seems a little artificial. After the normal 8...cxd5 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♗g5 ♗e6 (10...c6 is also safe enough), White has been unable to demonstrate an advantage. One of the key theoretical games derives from Lasker himself: 11 ♕f3 ♗e7 12 ♖fe1 h6 13 ♗xh6 gxh6 14 ♖xe6 fxe6 15 ♕g3+ ♔h8 16 ♕g6 ½-½ in view of the inevitable perpetual check, Alekhine-Lasker, Moscow (exhibition game) 1914.

9 ♕e2

After 9 ♔f1 cxd5 10 ♗g5 c6 11 ♕f3 0-0, Black is equal according to *ECO*. Not, however, 11...h6 12 ♗b5!! and Black's king and queen get caught in a nasty but entertaining crossfire, Velimirović-Lakić, Yugoslav Ch 1962. The defender must be thoroughly alert for such tactical shots when the king is still in the centre in an open position.

9...♕xe2+ 10 ♔xe2 cxd5 11 ♘b5 *(D)*

B



11...♔d8?!

Lasker soon gets into serious trouble after this move; the king is not safe on the d-file and must soon wander. *ECO* gives Sterner-Sefc, Dresden 1956, which continued 11...♗a5 12 ♗f4 ♔d8 13 ♖hd1 ♗d7 =. Black's formation is unconvincing, all the same. A more promising plan for White might be 13 ♖hc1!?, with the idea of opening the c-file with c4, and firing on Black's weak pawn on c7. White should be better.

12 ♖d1 c6 13 c3!

An important link in White's play. If now 13...cxb5 14 cxb4, both players will have compromised pawn-structures on the queenside, but whereas Black's pawns are open to attack, White's are well protected, and merely slightly less mobile than before. White will also have a mobile bishop-pair and good central control.

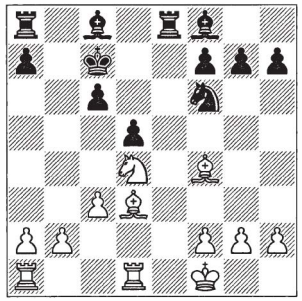
Black's bishop retreat allows White to strengthen his grip on the centre with gain of tempo.

13...♖e8+ 14 ♔f1 ♗f8 15 ♘d4 ♔c7

An awkward choice, but 15...c5 removes a vital defensive prop from the d-pawn, whereas 15...♗d7 leaves the bishop badly constrained without removing from Black the ultimate need to relocate his king.

16 ♗f4+ *(D)*

B



16...♔b6?!

Probably Lasker had not yet appreciated the force of the attack that breaks over his king's head. 16...♔b7 leaves the king on a safer square, but even then Black's queenside formation is unenviable after 17 b4.

Black can of course break the force of the attack with 16...♗d6!? 17 ♗xd6+ ♔xd6, but the phrases 'bad bishop' and 'hanging pawns' will immediately suggest themselves to any reasonably experienced player. White has had many smooth wins from this kind of position, but it would be overstating the case to suggest that 'the rest is a matter of technique'. Black has his resources, not least being something that a moment ago was a source of great anxiety to him – his king in the centre. If we consider the position after 18 c4 ♗d7 19 cxd5 cxd5, we have a pawn-structure and minor piece formation virtually identical to that of the famed game Fischer-Petrosian, Buenos Aires Ct (7) 1971, but there is the big difference that Petrosian's king was stuck on g8 in its normal castled position, and was unable to influence events in the centre. Fischer won in style (Supplementary Game L10.3). It is not so easy for White, however, if all the main entry squares for the rook are defended by a well-centralized king. Naturally White has other options, but Black seems to be able to meet these. For example, 19 ♖ac1 c5 followed by ...d4; or 19 b4 (to prevent ...c5) 19...dxc4 20 ♗xc4 ♔e7, and the fact that Black can counter-attack on the queenside, with, for example, ...a5, minimizes White's advantage.

Quite often in chess one has the difficult choice of whether to accept inferiority in a very technical type of position, or whether to keep more tension in the position, at the cost of falling under direct attack. There is no universal answer to this dilemma, but when considering the type of positional advantage that is involved under the first option, a distinction must be made between positions which are 'technically lost' and positions which are 'inferior but possibly/probably defensible'. One can make considerable concessions to avoid the first type of position, but there is no automatic need to avoid the second type. Indeed, if avoiding exchanges means that the activity of the opponent's pieces remains unchallenged, it is a positive mistake to fail to offer simplification.

For once, Lasker's defensive technique is at fault here.

17 a4 a5

To allow White the further advance of his a-pawn would be horrendous.

18 b4!

Spielmann reminds his opponent that we are not in an endgame yet, but rather in a queenless middlegame, and that middlegame principles (such as the desirability of the attacker opening up lines in front of the opposing king) still apply. Black's position is now critical.

18...axb4

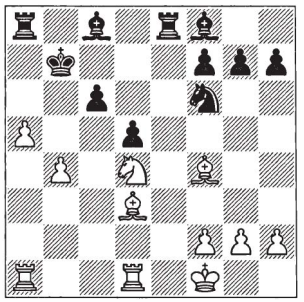
Not a happy choice, but at least it keeps the b-file closed.

19 a5+ ♔b7

An even less happy choice, but Black gets mated after 19...♖xa5?? 20 ♖xa5 ♔xa5 21 ♗c7+ ♔a4 22 ♖a1#.

20 cxb4 *(D)*

B



20...♘e4!?

Lasker was not the greatest of prophylactic defenders, and could often drift into bad positions, but when the going got tough he had a superb sense of self-preservation. The text-move involves a pawn sacrifice, but at least his knight gets into active play and, by playing ...g5 next move, he can fianchetto his king's bishop, which by covering the a1-d4 squares significantly interferes with the coordination of the white attacking forces. Less sophisticated moves leave Black in grave danger:

1) White's attack will of course be too hot to handle after 20...♗xb4? 21 ♖db1 c5 22 ♘c2 followed by ♘xb4.

2) 20...♗d7 is more interesting, but would have given Spielmann a splendid opportunity to display his combinative prowess after 21 b5 c5 22 b6!. Then:

2a) 22...cxd4? leaves the king to be mated on b1 (!) after 23 a6+ ♔xb6 24 ♖ab1+ ♔a5 (24...♔c5? 25 ♖dc1#; 24...♔c6 25 ♗b5+ +–) 25 ♗d2+ ♔a4 26 ♗c2+ ♔a3 27 ♗c1+ ♔a2 28 ♗b3+ ♔xb1 29 ♗a3#. Had Lasker defended ineptly, this brilliancy would have been endlessly anthologized; instead he showed more resolution and the game has been virtually forgotten.

2b) 22...c4, and then:

2b1) 23 ♗c7?!:

2b11) 23...cxd3? leads to another brilliancy. 24 a6+ ♖xa6 (24...♔c8 is met by 25 ♖dc1!, and not 25 b7+? ♔xc7) 25 ♖xa6 ♔xa6 26 ♖a1+ ♔b7 27 ♖a7+ ♔c8 28 ♗f4! ♔d8 29 b7 ♔e7 30 ♖a8! and the pawn queens, the counter-sacrifice 30...d2 31 ♗xd2 ♗b5+ 32 ♘xb5 ♘d7 33 ♗b4+ being ineffective.

2b12) However, 23...♖a6! followed by ...♖ea8 suddenly makes White's play seem superficial.

2b2) If White were to switch to endgame mode with 23 ♗f5!, there would be no doubt as to whose passed pawns would be more effective following 23...♗xf5 24 ♘xf5, and if then 24...♖e4, 25 ♗d6 g6 26 ♗xf8 gxf5 27

♗g7 and Black's d-pawn falls, or alternatively 24...g6 25 ♘e3 ♗g7! 26 ♖a2! and White's pressure should prevail, although Black is not without counter-chances.

Lasker was renowned for playing the opponent as well as the board. Spielmann was a great connoisseur of middlegame tactics, but was less certain of himself in the endgame, so Lasker aims towards an endgamish position. It is interesting to speculate whether he would have offered a less tactically inclined opponent the complications after 20...♗d7.

21 ♘xc6

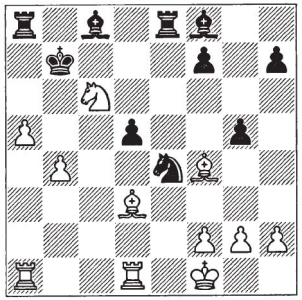
It is just about possible, but extremely unlikely, that Lasker had missed this tactical blow. He would have been more concerned with getting his pieces into active play, even at the cost of a pawn or two.

If anything, Lasker might have been speculating that Spielmann would be unable to resist the temptation to decide the game tactically, and that he would be disinclined to choose the more restrained but more convincing 21 a6+! ♔b6 22 ♖dc1 ♗d7 23 ♗e3 ♔c7 (23...♗xb4? 24 ♖ab1 c5 25 ♖xb4+ cxb4 26 ♘b3+ +–) 24 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 25 b5 ♖e6 26 bxc6 ♖xc6 27 ♗b5 ♖xc1+ 28 ♖xc1+ ♔d8 29 a7 (Bogatyrchuk) and the passed pawn decides. Yet again, Lasker gets away with a fifty-percenter!

21...g5! *(D)*

21...♔xc6? 22 ♖ac1+ is quickly decisive: 22...♔b7 23 ♖c7+ ♔b8 24 ♖e7+ ♘d6 25 ♗xd6#, 22...♔d7 23 ♗b5+ ♔d8 24 ♖xd5+ or 22...♘c5 23 ♗e3 regaining the piece and keeping a ferocious attack.

W



After the text-move, pieces are flying all over the place, and two of Spielmann's are loose, which is itself an achievement given the dreadfulness of Black's earlier position.

22 ♗xe4

This keeps things simple and relatively clear. There must have been a considerable temptation to repeat the piece sacrifice with 22 a6+, but the various possibilities are deeply obscure after either 22...♔xc6 23 ♖ac1+ ♔d7 24 ♗b5+ ♔e6, or 22...♔b6!? 23 ♗e3+ (23 ♗b8!?) 23...♔xc6 24 b5+ ♔d6 25 b6 ♗g7.

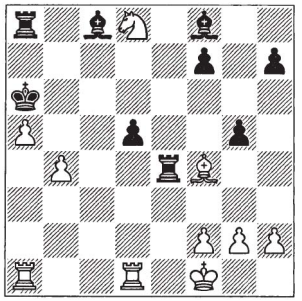
In chess, the attacker likes complications, but not *random* complications which may totally turn the game around. There are times when even the tactician will want to keep things simple. Meanwhile, we see that yet again Lasker is defending by throwing up just about every tactical barrier that he can, trying to randomize the position.

22...♖xe4

Lasker is glad to see the removal of this bishop. White's loss of the bishop-pair makes it easier for Black to blockade the queenside pawns; he can aim to control the light squares.

23 ♘d8+ ♔a6 *(D)*

W



24 ♗xg5?!

If you can persuade your opponent that his carefully constructed attacking position is somehow jinxed, that is an important part of the defensive struggle successfully accomplished. The jinx is seen, for example, in such variations as 24 b5+ ♔xb5, and if 25 ♖xd5+, then 25...♔c4, when two white pieces are under attack; 26 ♖xg5 ♖xf4 27 ♖a4+ ♗b4 then gives Black a secure extra piece. Spielmann evidently looks through a few such variations, but decides that Black can defend and even eventually pick up the queenside pawns. He decides that it is best therefore to have a kingside pawn in the bag, to improve his chances when the endgame arrives.

Even so, his chosen move betrays an unjustified lack of confidence in his queenside prospects, and it is the queenside where any quick and decisive breakthrough is likely to take place. White has the double advantage that his pawns are mightily strong if they are allowed to remain on the board, while all sorts of lines will open up in front of the black king if the pawns disappear. The most natural and logical move in this context is 24 ♗e3!, pointing the bishop towards the queenside, taking flight-squares from the black king, and aiming to sweep a path open for his passed pawns. White is not exactly ignoring Black's pawns either, since both the d-pawn and the f-pawn remain under threat. If 24...♗e6 25 ♘c6, White is ahead of the game, in all except terms of the unimportant g-pawn. For example, 25...♗xb4? 26 ♖ab1, or 25...♗d7 26 ♖ac1 threatening b5+. Or there is the king-hunt 25...♔b5 26 ♘d4+ ♔xb4 27 ♖db1+ ♔c4 28 ♖a4+ ♔d3 29 ♖b3#. Finally, 24...♗b7 25 b5+ wins a piece. In all quiet variations White is a pawn up with complete positional control; he is a vital tempo ahead of the game.

All this is not so difficult to see. What probably concerned Spielmann was 24...♖xb4!? 25 ♖xd5 ♖b5!, when the exchange of rooks would make the a-pawn untenable in the long run, leaving the possibility of an endgame with all the pawns on the same side of the board, which would be very difficult to win for White, sometimes even with two extra pawns. The difficult move to see, since it involves returning the rook to a square it has only just left, is 26 ♖dd1!. The point is that the removal of Black's d-pawn allows White's rook potential access to the squares behind. In particular, Black's dark-squared bishop is tied to the defence of d6 (26...♗g7?? 27 ♖d6+). White is still a pawn up, his a-pawn is tactically safe for the time being, and he has various ways to improve his position with, for example, ♘xf7 or one of the rooks to c1.

The impression given is that 24 ♗e3! is a much cleaner winning line

than the text-move, but that White has to see a couple of difficult points. It is a virtue of Lasker's unrelenting defence that he forces his opponent to keep calculating.

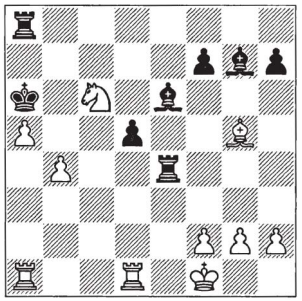
24...♗e6! 25 ♘c6

It would be tempting to simplify to an endgame two pawns up with 25 ♘xe6 fxe6, but then Black would have successfully restrained and blockaded White's queenside pawns, and would be all set to destroy them. White has not a scrap of advantage on the kingside in this line.

In the absence of the light-squared bishops, White needs his knight, as otherwise he has no influence on the light squares.

25...♗g7 *(D)*

W



The first ray of light at the end of the tunnel – Black has control of the centre! Of course he still has his problems, in that he is two pawns down, his king is exposed to attack, and White will soon be able to contest the centre with ♗e3. Black must continue to play very actively.

26 ♖ac1 ♖c4 27 ♗e3

After 27 ♖xc4?! dxc4, Black's isolated passed pawn, backed up by the bishop-pair, is more threatening than White's connected but blockaded passed pawns. Varnusz gives 28 ♘d4 ♗xd4 29 ♖xd4 ±; maybe so, but this is short of the outright win that White should be looking for. Black has genuine defensive chances.

27...♔b5 28 ♘a7+ ♔xb4

Another big step forward for Black – he wins back one of his pawns. Indeed momentarily it might appear that Black is the one who is pressing. Bogatyrchuk suggested that the natural capture was in fact a serious mistake, as White could have made use of the lines newly opened up, and that 28...♔a4! would have been correct. There is much cut-and-thrust in the variation he gives: 29 b5 ♖xc1 30 ♖xc1 ♔xa5 31 ♖c6 d4 32 ♖a6+ ♔b4 33 ♘c6+ ♔xb5 34 ♖xa8 dxe3 35 ♘a7+ ♔a6 36 fxe3 ♔b7 37 ♖g8 ♗f6, and after 38 ♘b5 ♗c4+ the stray knight tumbles. However, White is a passed pawn ahead, and this pawn is far enough advanced to be genuinely immediately dangerous. This suggests that the logical approach for White would be to try to consolidate, rather than to enter a string of tactics. Exactly how to go about this is an open question, which in itself is an encouragement to the defender, but 29 ♗b6!?, hoping to stay a tempo ahead of the game, might be a good start.

29 ♗b6? *(D)*

A natural move, since all White's queenside pieces are mutually protected, while Black's king has no retreat and is exposed and therefore open to attack. Bogatyrchuk notes, however, that by sacrificing the second of the two passed pawns, and by

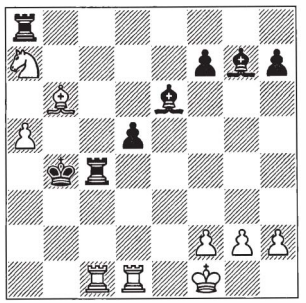
going all-out for a mating attack, White could almost certainly have still secured the win. 29 ♖b1+!, and then:

1) 29...♔xa5 30 ♖d2!! and Black is caught in a mating net, e.g. 30...♖a4 31 ♘c6+ ♔a6 32 ♖b6# or 30...♖xa7 31 ♖a2+ ♖a4 32 ♗d2+ mates.

2) 29...♔a4 30 ♖d2!!, and Black has similar problems; for example, 30...♖c3 31 ♖a2+ forces mate: 31...♖a3 32 ♗c5! ♖xa2 33 ♖b4+ ♔xa5 34 ♘c6+ ♔a6 35 ♖b6#.

One suspects that throughout this game, Spielmann was disorientated by the conflicting temptations of pursuing a mating attack, sacrificing pawns if necessary, and trying to win the endgame with his queenside pawns. In the light of later analysis, Lasker's defence may not have been fully accurate, as he missed some of the best moves, and Spielmann missed some clear wins. He was able, however, to keep his opponent under pressure by presenting him with a continuous stream of alternative possibilities, and in terms of battling away from a losing position, this is not a bad way of defending.

B



29...♖c3?

This is a strange lapse which gives White renewed hope of winning, just as Black had made his way back into the game. Of course, time-pressure could well have been responsible. 29...♗b2!, closing down lines on the queenside, gives excellent drawing chances. If 30 ♖b1, then 30...♔b3 is the most active, not fearing 31 ♗d4 ♖xd4 32 ♖xd4 ♔c2. Black is not yet safe, but has activated his pieces well, which is the best he can hope for at this stage of the defence.

The text-move creates an extra flight-square for the king, but blocks the bishop from the defence.

30 ♖b1+

30 ♘c6+ could also be considered, but after 30...♔b5! (anything else loses quickly) 31 ♖xc3 ♗xc3 32 ♘d4+ ♗xd4 33 ♖xd4 White has the tedious task of trying to convert the extra pawn in a position with opposite-coloured bishops. The weakness of the pawn on h7 gives White serious hopes of playing for a win, but why bother? The text-move is more accurate: White exchanges bishop for bishop, remaining with a good knight versus a bad bishop.

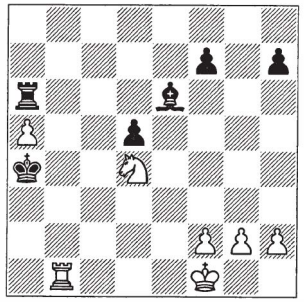
30...♖b3 31 ♘c6+ ♔a4 32 ♗d4 ♖xb1 33 ♖xb1 ♗xd4 34 ♘xd4 ♖a6 *(D)*

Unfortunately for Black, the pawn could not be taken in view either of the skewer (34...♔xa5?? 35 ♖a1+) or the fork (34...♖xa5?? 35 ♖a1+ ♔b4 36 ♘c6+). All Black can do is to make sure that the pawn is genuinely threatened, and hope for the best.

35 ♖a1+?!

Much is made of the endgame brilliance of such players as Capablanca

W



and Rubinstein, and indeed Lasker himself. These players were superb practitioners, but part of the shine is due to the sad fact that the endgames of so many high-ranking players were riddled with errors. So it proves here. Spielmann had no reason to allow the black king to leave the a-file. All he had to do was to find a constructive move X on the kingside, such that the position after 35 X ♔xa5 36 ♖a1+ ♔b6 37 ♖xa6+ ♔xa6 is a win for White. The most obvious sequence surprisingly leads only to a draw: 35 ♔e2?! ♔xa5 36 ♖a1+ ♔b6 37 ♖xa6+ ♔xa6 38 ♔e3 ♔b6 39 ♔f4 ♔c5 40 ♔e5 f6+! 41 ♔xf6 ♔xd4 42 ♔xe6 and the pawns queen at the same time. 35 h4! is a simple win, however: 35...♔xa5 (Black has no good waiting moves; 35...♖d6 36 a6; 35...♗d7 36 ♖b7) 36 ♖a1+ ♔b6 37 ♖xa6+ ♔xa6 38 ♘xe6 fxe6 39 g4 ♔b5 40 g5 ♔c5 41 h5 ♔d6 42 g6 hxg6 43 h6 and White safely queens his pawn.

35...♔b4 36 ♔e2 ♗d7 37 ♘c2+??

And this is totally incomprehensible, even allowing for the effects of time-trouble. 37 ♔d3, blocking the king, should still be a win with normal play. For example, 37...♖xa5 38 ♘c2+ ♔b5 39 ♖xa5+ ♔xa5 40 ♔d4 winning the d-pawn, and before long some of the kingside pawns; or 37...♗a4 38 ♖c1 ♖xa5 39 ♖c7.

At least White had to calculate a pawn race to find the simplest win on move 35. Here there is no such excuse; all that is needed is elementary positional play.

37...♔c3 38 ♘e3 ♗b5+ 39 ♔e1 d4 40 ♖c1+ ♔d3 41 ♖d1+ ½-½

Possibly agreed drawn during the adjournment, although there must have been a temptation for Black to ask White how he intended to hold the position after 41...♔e4.

An absorbing game, though one with far too many unforced errors. The tenacity of Lasker's defence from moves 17 to 25 makes a vivid impression.

Supplementary Games

Game L10.1
Kan – Lasker
Moscow 1935
Slav Defence, Exchange Variation

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 ♘c3 ♘c6 5 ♘f3 ♘f6 6 ♗f4 ♗f5 7 ♕b3?!

Already an error; better is 7 e3.

7...♘a5 8 ♕a4+ ♗d7 9 ♕c2 ♖c8 10 e3 b5 11 a3 e6 12 ♗d3 ♗e7 13 ♘e5 ♘c4 14 ♕e2

Black has now gained two tempi.

14...0-0 15 0-0 ♗e8 16 ♖ac1 ♘d7 17 ♘xc4 bxc4?!

This leaves his pawn-structure too static, with White having the one pawn-break, e4, that matters. 17...dxc4 18 ♗b1 ♕b6!? gives Black a mobile queenside pawn-majority; the kingside can be covered by ...f5, ...♘f6, etc.

18 ♗b1 f5 19 f3 ♘b6 20 ♗c2 ♗d6 21 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 22 ♖cd1 ♗d7 23 ♕d2 ♗c6 24 ♖fe1 ♖cd8 25 ♖e2 ♖d7 26 ♖de1 g6?!

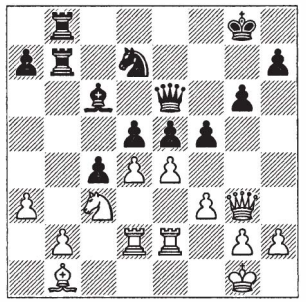
Not very Steinitzian. Black makes an unnecessary pawn move in front of his king in order to decentralize his rooks. White's e4 break is for now well covered, and Black could think of forcing *White* to play a weakening pawn move on the kingside, with 26...♖f6!? followed by ...♖h6.

27 ♖d1 ♖b8 28 ♕e1 ♖db7 29 ♖dd2 ♘d7 30 ♗b1 e5 31 ♕g3 ♕e6?

31...♕f6 32 f4!?.

32 e4! *(D)*

B



A famous position, reproduced in many texts. Lasker is lost, and decides that the only *practical* chance to hold is to stir up the mud.

32...exd4! 33 exf5?

This move has often been criticized. In the quiet of home analysis, it is easy enough to see that 33 exd5 should win, and on basic principles it is the more attractive move since the pawn forks queen and knight, with the prospect of a further fork on c6, rather than queen and pawn. However, it takes a further ten moves of complications, well beyond normal calculation horizons, before Black's position is fully resignable. This in itself might have been enough to dissuade Kan from the critical decision, and he plays more directly for a kingside attack. It is difficult to make the correct decision with the clock running. After 33 exd5!:

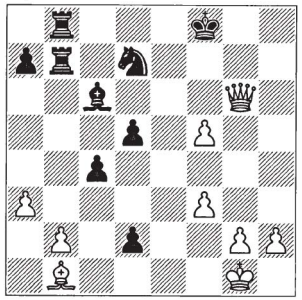
1) 33...♕f6 34 dxc6 dxc3 35 ♖xd7 ♖xb2 36 ♗c2 ♕xc6 37 ♖ee7 ♕f6 (37...♕c5+ 38 ♔f1 ♖b1+ 39 ♔e2 +–) 38 ♖g7+ ♕xg7 39 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 40 ♕e5+ followed by ♕xc3 +–.

2) 33...dxc3 34 dxe6 cxd2 35 ♖xd2 c3 (35...♖xb2?! 36 ♗c2 +–) 36 exd7 cxd2 (one can appreciate Kan's reluctance to calculate down this line, when the alternative appears simpler) 37 ♗a2+ ♔g7 38 ♕e5+ ♔h6 39 ♕f4+ ♔h5 (White wins with a similar manoeuvre after 39...♔g7 40 ♕d4+) 40 g4+ fxg4 41 ♕xg4+ ♔h6 42 ♕h4+ ♔g7 43 ♕d4+ (43 d8♕?? ♖xd8 44 ♕xd8 ♖d7) 43...♔h6 44 ♕xd2+ followed by d8♕ +–.

Lasker's play illustrates a fundamental principle of defence. The *wrong* attitude would be "I think I'm losing in the complications, and I don't want to end up at the wrong end of a brilliancy." The correct reasoning, as shown by Lasker, would be "My position is dreadful; I am losing. It does not matter whether I play simple chess or complicated chess; my position is still objectively losing. I have a much better practical chance of saving the day if I keep things complicated, force my opponent to calculate difficult variations, and remain ready to pounce

on any error." Obviously the player will lose more brilliancies this way, but more importantly he or she will also score more points.

33...♕f6! 34 ♖e6 dxc3! 35 ♖xf6 cxd2 36 ♖xg6+ hxg6 37 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 *(D)*



38 ♕d6+?

This check merely drives the king closer to safety on the queenside. Often the best way to trap a king is to keep it rooted to the spot. 38 ♗c2! is far more accurate, keeping ♕xc6, ♕d6+ and f6 all in reserve. The position remains complicated, but the onus is on Black, rather than White, to find a way to save the game.

38...♔e8 39 ♗c2 ♖b6 40 f6 ♔d8

Now the pawn on d2 is a monster, while White's attack fails to connect.

41 f7 ♔c8 42 f8♕+ ♘xf8 43 ♕xf8+ ♔b7 44 ♕f6?!

Following the wrong plan. It is more important to remove the d-pawn than to save the b-pawn, and 44 ♕f4! ♖xb2 45 ♕xd2 is critical (45...♗a4?? 46 ♕xd5+). However, Black's pawn-mass should still prevail after 45...d4!, so really it is only a minor error.

44...♔a6! 45 ♕d6

45 ♕d4 ♖xb2 46 ♕xd2 ♗a4 –+.

45...♖e8 46 h4 ♖e1+ 47 ♔h2 ♖c1 48 ♗f5 d1♕ 49 ♗c8+ ♔a5 0-1

50 ♕c5+ ♔a4.

Game L10.2

Alekhine – Lasker

Moscow (exhibition game) 1914

Scotch Four Knights

(See the note to Black's 8th move in the main game.)

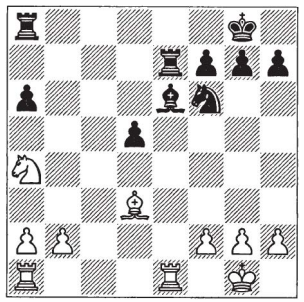
Game L10.3

Fischer – Petrosian

Buenos Aires Ct (7) 1971

Sicilian Defence, Kan Variation

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6 5 ♗d3 ♘c6 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 0-0 d5 8 c4 ♘f6 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 exd5 exd5 11 ♘c3 ♗e7 12 ♕a4+! ♕d7?! 13 ♖e1 ♕xa4 14 ♘xa4 ♗e6 15 ♗e3 0-0 16 ♗c5 ♖fe8 17 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 *(D)*



If we compare with the Spielmann-Lasker game, with 16...♗d6!? 17 ♗xd6+ ♔xd6 instead of 16...♔b6?!, the main structural difference is that Black's king would already be on d6. Possibly this would give Black the margin of the draw in the earlier game.

In Fischer-Petrosian, note the care with which Fischer ensures that the black king does not enter active play.

18 b4 ♔f8

This is as close as Black's king gets to the centre!

19 ♘c5 ♗c8 20 f3 ♖ea7 21 ♖e5 ♗d7 22 ♘xd7+!

This move caused a sensation, because everyone expected Fischer to play against the bad bishop, but it is not so easy for White to break through on the c-file if the knight is in the way. Fischer, like Capablanca, knew the art of sacrificing one type of positional advantage in favour of another.

22...♖xd7 23 ♖c1 ♖d6 24 ♖c7 ♘d7 25 ♖e2 g6 26 ♔f2 h5 27 f4 h4 28 ♔f3 f5 29 ♔e3 d4+ 30 ♔d2 ♘b6 31 ♖ee7 ♘d5 32 ♖f7+ ♔e8 33 ♖b7 ♘xb4 34 ♗c4 1-0

The black king, when it was stuck on the kingside, was unable to cover the entry squares for the white rooks, and when the rooks invaded, the king became the prime target.

Lasker played two more tournaments, but age started to tell. In the double-round all-play-all in Moscow the following year, Lasker started solidly with 5/9 (+2 –1 =6), but a brisk loss to Botvinnik initiated a collapse, and he finished on less than 50%. At Nottingham a couple of months later, Lasker did well (2½/4) against World Champions past, present and future (Botvinnik, Capablanca, Euwe, Alekhine) and against the home players (4/4), but scored only 2/6 against the rest. During his period of exile he spent time at various stages in both London and Moscow, but lived his last few years in New York, where he died in 1941. He had an immense influence on younger players in the Soviet Union, and Tal and Korchnoi, in particular, regarded Lasker as their chess hero.

Chess is often a messy game, in which the detailed analysis of obscure positions, the playing of hunches, good nerves and determination count for more than the adherence to the positional rules of an elementary textbook. Lasker's immense importance to the development of chess style was that he grafted this very practical conception of the chess struggle on to the Steinitzian principles of positional play, which he regarded as important theoretical findings, and not dogmas. He did not, however, progress to the next stage, developed by Alekhine and greatly extended by Botvinnik, in which detailed research into chess, with an emphasis on the analysis and understanding of openings, created, as it were, a *science* of chess. This does not mean that Lasker was any inferior to Alekhine as a chess-player; on the contrary, Lasker had a healthy 4½-2½ plus score, with his only loss being when he was in his sixties. What was happening was that Lasker's distinctive method of chess thinking, along with his outstanding natural talent, allowed him to dominate chess to an extraordinary degree from 1896 onwards. Even when this dominance started to diminish, he could still keep at or near the top by catching up with the latest theoretical developments. Like Capablanca, he was able to reach the top without detailed chess research. His openings were makeshift, and he did

not have Capablanca's knack for keeping out of trouble, so he often needed all his defensive and counter-attacking ingenuity to reach good scores. Lasker's games often appear disjointed, a poorly played opening being followed by the middlegame of a magician. It is precisely this disjointedness which suggests that Lasker did not have a fully rounded theory of defence, despite his practical achievements. The ideal defender would not only be able to escape from bad positions, but would have the ultra-sensitive positional antennae that would prevent him or her getting into the bad position in the first place. We now turn to a player of this type – Tigran Petrosian.

Petrosian as Defender

Game P1

Petrosian – Smyslov

USSR Ch (Moscow) 1951

Queen's Gambit, Slav Defence

I was wondering long and hard whether to include this game, or whether to search through the databases to find a more typically 'Petrosianical' example against Smyslov. But perhaps the really interesting aspect of this game is that it is so untypical. There cannot be many examples where Petrosian had to kick up mud after a gambit had gone wrong. Even in his younger days, Petrosian was usually far too cautious to indulge in gambit play. Petrosian was very friendly at the time with Efim Geller, a sharp tactician who later was to become a scourge of world champions. And Geller suggested that there was this interesting line in the Slav that his friend might want to try, against an opponent who was 1½ points ahead of him, and who was unlikely to succumb to quiet positional play...

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3

This already indicates a willingness to play a lively game; 4 e3 is the solid alternative.

Black may now try to hold on to the gambit pawn with 4...a6!?. After 5 e4 b5 6 e5 ♘d5 7 a4, Black, compared with the game, has substituted ...a6 for ...c6. It may seem attractive for Black not to commit his c-pawn, but Black's a-pawn does not protect the b-pawn, in view of the pin against the a8-rook. White is better after 7...♘xc3 8 bxc3 ♕d5 (8...♗b7 9 e6!) 9 g3 ♗b7 10 ♗g2 ♕d7 11 ♗a3, although there have of course been many attempts by Black to defend. His usual plan of development is ...♗d5, ...g6, ...♗g7 and ...♘c6: Black is solid on the central light squares, but under pressure elsewhere.

4...c6

Smyslov avoids the challenge, and settles for the main line of the Slav.

5 e4 *(D)*

The Geller Gambit.

It is valid to draw a distinction between a gambit and a positional sacrifice, although there are also borderline cases. Most strong players would instinctively agree that this particular example is a gambit. What though is the distinction?

If one plays a positional sacrifice, the compensation is usually highly concrete; complete and unchallenged

B

control of a complex of squares, a dangerous passed pawn, a permanent weakness in the opponent's pawn-structure, or similar considerations. In gambit play, the compensation, though real and dangerous, is more nebulous, perhaps taking the form of a sacrifice for a lead in development, which *may* lead to a permanent positional advantage, or which *may* lead to a raging attack, but which could also backfire. In many cases the gambit move is objectively best, but usually the gambit is merely one of many possible ideas.

The reason for choosing a gambit is often psychological – to put the opponent under extra pressure by creating a situation in which the slightest misstep by either side is fatal, and by advertising that the gambiteer feels that he or she feels capable of outplaying the opponent in the complicated positions which arise. Geller himself implies that his system is a true gambit when he notes, in *The Application of Chess Theory*, his regrets at his gambit's disappearance "since it leads to interesting play, rich in chances for both sides". The claim is *not* made that the line is good for White, merely that it gives chances!

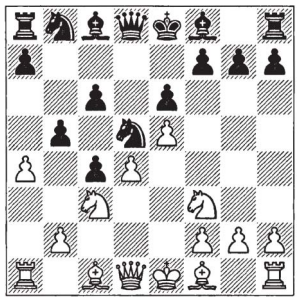
Often the very complexity of a gambit makes it difficult to tell with confidence whether that gambit is correct or not. Recent findings have cast doubt on the ultimate soundness of the Geller Gambit, although in his younger days, Kasparov, with a style well suited to gambit play, scored well with the variation.

The safer system is 5 a4, preventing ...b5, with White then regaining the pawn with e3; both Smyslov and Petrosian developed substantial experience with this variation.

5...b5 6 e5 ♘d5 7 a4 e6 *(D)*

In Tolush-Smyslov, USSR Ch 1947, Black emerged well from the complications after 7...♗e6?! 8 axb5?! ♘xc3 9 bxc3 cxb5 10 ♘g5 ♗d5 11 e6 fxe6 12 ♕g4 h5 13 ♕f4 ♕d6!. The exchange on b5 merely helped improve Black's communications, with c6 freed for a black knight. 8 ♘g5! ♘xc3 9 bxc3 ♗d5 10 e6! fxe6 11 ♗f4 (Taimanov) gives White a far more formidable attack. The second pawn sacrifice is a positional sacrifice, not a gambit!

W



8 axb5

The direct approach. The positions after 8 ♗e2 are not to everyone's taste,

in that White, having gambited a pawn, attacks nothing, but is content to develop quietly, relying solely on his kingside space advantage. However, it is not so easy for Black to find a totally reliable disposition for his forces, given his vulnerability on the dark squares, and Geller twice gained the advantage against Smyslov here:

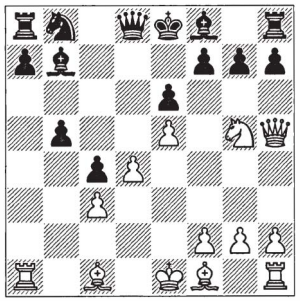
1) 8...♗b7 9 ♗g5 ♘xc3?! (9...♕b6 10 0-0 a6 11 ♘e4 ♘d7 is unclear – *ECO*) 10 bxc3 ♕c7 11 0-0 h6 12 ♗h4 ♘d7 13 ♘d2 ♘b6 14 ♘e4! c5 15 ♗f3 cxd4 16 ♕xd4 ♗xe4 17 ♕xe4 ♘d5 18 ♕g4 with a lead in development, Geller-Smyslov, USSR Ch 1950.

2) 8...♗b7 9 0-0 a6 10 ♘e4 ♘d7?! (10...h6!?) 11 ♘fg5 ♗e7 12 ♗h5 0-0 13 ♕g4 (all played with splendid directness) 13...♘c7 14 ♘xh7! ♔xh7, Geller-Smyslov, Budapest 1952, and now *ECO* gives 15 ♗g5! as strong.

Smyslov was, in relative terms, slightly suspect against gambit play.

8...♘xc3 9 bxc3 cxb5 10 ♘g5 ♗b7 11 ♕h5 *(D)*

B



11...g6

Playable, but the gain of tempo comes at the cost of a weakening of Black's defensive pawn-structure. The whole variation has been more or less abandoned in top-level chess, not because of the text-move, but because of 11...♕d7!, a move more in the spirit of Steinitz and Lasker. Black has to sacrifice the exchange in the critical lines, but with his pawn-structure unbroken, his king's fortress remains safe, and with his lead in development, he is able to start a dangerous counter-attack.

11...♕d7 12 ♘xh7?! ♘c6 13 ♘xf8? ♕xd4!! strongly favours Black (and indeed White immediately resigned in Veselovsky-Kudishevich, USSR 1969), but two renowned tacticians missed the point in Kasparov-Kupreichik, USSR Ch (Minsk) 1979, Black settling for 13...♖xh5? 14 ♘xd7 ♔xd7 15 ♖b1 ±.

The theoretically critical line is 11...♕d7 12 ♗e2 ♗d5 13 ♘xh7 ♘c6 14 ♘f6+?! (14 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 15 ♕g5 a5 is unclear) 14...gxf6 15 ♕xh8. Black's sacrifice was unsuccessful in Flear-Delaney, Bath Z 1987, after 15...fxe5?! 16 ♗h6 0-0-0 17 ♗xf8 exd4?! (Veličković notes that 17...♗xg2 18 ♖g1 ♕d5 keeps Black in the game) 18 ♕g7 d3 19 ♗d1 and White soon consolidated and won. Veličković, in his analysis of the game in *Informator 43*, killed off White's interest in the line by showing that 15...0-0-0! is strong, and if 16 ♕xf6, then 16...♗xg2 17 ♖g1 ♘xd4! 18 cxd4 ♗b4+ with a winning attack. After 16 ♕h3 fxe5 17 dxe5 (17 ♗g5 exd4! 18 ♗xd8 ♕xd8 19 0-0 d3 ∓ Deng Kongliang-Tan Chengxuan, Chinese Ch 1988) 17...♘xe5, Black has excellent compensation for the exchange. It is open to question whether White can equalize.

It took nearly 40 years after the Petrosian-Smyslov game for this to

become established as main-line theory, yet despite all this Black's defensive plan of ...♕d7, ...♗d5 and ...♘c6 accords with all the canons of classical defensive theory, with Black creating strong-points in the centre, avoiding weakening moves, preparing counterplay, preparing to sacrifice material to turn the position round, and not letting the minor weakness on h7 get in the way of the big picture. White's earlier gambit play has left him with a dangerously eroded pawn-structure on the queenside and in the centre, whereas Black holds over White the long-term threat of a general queenside pawn advance, so that simplification into an endgame is not always going to be desirable for White. White's need to generate a quick attack, to compensate for the gambit pawn, has also left him behind in development, and his king will remain in the centre for a long time.

So all the positional logic, as well as current theory, favours 11...♕d7. The earlier move, 11...g6, may now be seen as a nervous reaction, based on overestimation of the significance of the threat to h7.

12 ♕g4 ♗e7

It is too late to build up on d5: 12...♗d5?! 13 ♕f4 ♕d7 14 ♕f6 ± *ECO*. The hole on f6 is there to be exploited if Black is not careful!

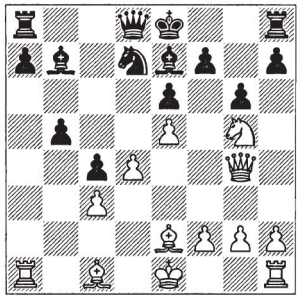
13 ♗e2 ♘d7 *(D)*

13...♗d5!? may be met with either 14 ♘e4!? or 14 ♗f3!?. The text-move envisages bringing a knight to d5.

14 h4?!

Vasiliev (in *Tigran Petrosian: His Life and Games*) states that this was over-the-board improvisation. He then

W



notes that White improved in the game Geller-Unzicker, Saltsjöbaden IZ 1952, where 14 ♗f3 ♕c7 15 ♘e4 led to advantage to White (Game P1.2). What Vasiliev does not mention (in a biographical work on Petrosian!) is that it was Petrosian himself who strengthened Black's defences in this line, meeting 14 ♗f3 with 14...♕c8!. This was not severely tested in Szabo-Petrosian, Hungary-USSR 1955, as White immediately went wrong with 15 ♗a3? ♗xf3 16 ♘xf3 ♕a6 ∓, but the point of 14...♕c8 is not solely about access to a6.

What is the *positional* logic for preferring the queen's move to a light square, when the most obvious holes in Black's position are on dark squares? While Black is indeed weak on the dark squares, there is nothing on any of these squares that may be actively attacked. Black must take due care that he does not allow the unchallenged occupation of a critical dark square (for example, with a white knight on d6), of the sort that is likely to herald a more general invasion of the position. The guiding principle here is one of economical defence; Black must do what he needs to, to

prevent such an invasion, but not an iota more. However, the interesting questions concern the light squares, where Black is both strong and weak. Indeed he is weak on the light squares precisely because he is strong on them! It is not just squares that come under attack, but also pawns, and if Black were to suffer a collapse on f7, his whole position would be in danger of collapse; he would be weak on the dark squares, but equally weak on the light squares. Sacrificial breakthroughs have to be borne in mind.

Black may reduce some of the pressure on f7 by exchanging bishop for knight on g5, but this removes even the minimal protection he has for the dark squares, and should best be left for emergencies. The idea behind Petrosian's 14...♕c8 is to provide extra protection for the e6-square, so that he has the chance of covering up the weakness on f7 by playing ...f5 without suffering a collapse on e6. This is shown most clearly if White tries to continue, by analogy with Geller-Unzicker, 15 ♘e4?!; then Black plays 15...0-0, and if 16 ♗h6?!, then 16...f5! 17 exf6 ♘xf6 18 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6, and Black has broken his shackles and taken the initiative. Kondratiev suggests a parallel line after 15 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 16 ♘e4, Black reaching equality, and one suspects rather more, with 16...f5! 17 exf6 ♘xf6 18 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 19 ♕xe6+ ♕e7. 15 h4 is perhaps critical, but after 15...h5 16 ♕f4 (16 ♕g3!? – *ECO*) 16...♗xg5 17 hxg5 ♗xf3 18 ♕xf3 ♘b6 19 ♖h4 (so far Rogers-M.Kostić, Kraljevo 1984), Black has no need to worry about the assault on h5, provided he can spirit his king away to the queenside; for example, 19...♘d5 20 g4 ♕b7 21 gxh5 gxh5 22 ♖xh5 ♖xh5 23 ♕xh5 0-0-0, and the net effect of all White's kingside pawn activity is that Black's control of the light squares has been strengthened, with f5 becoming a possible outpost for the knight. Kostić tried 19...♖g8?! instead, but after 20 d5! ♘xd5 21 ♗a3 the clearance of the d4-square proved useful for White, who can double rooks on the d-file to threaten an exchange sacrifice on d5. White later won, after complications.

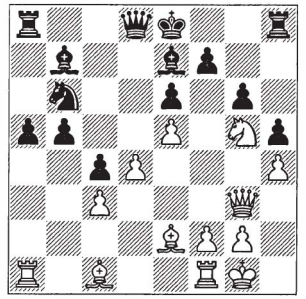
14...h5 15 ♕g3

If here 15 ♕f4? ♗xg5 16 hxg5, then Black snatches the g-pawn with 16...♗xg2. There then remains no possibility of a pawn-on-pawn attack on h5.

15...♘b6 16 0-0 a5 *(D)*

In view of what happens next, Black could consider alternatives here; maybe 16...♗d5!?.

W



17 d5!

An inspired choice by Petrosian, who works on the principle that 'attack is the best form of defence'. Petrosian recognizes he is in deep trouble, and now he has to find some

way to stay in the game, fighting. The balance of forces is such that he cannot possibly hope to achieve anything against strong play by passively going on the defensive – but this is precisely how Geller, one of the world's most formidable attacking players, tried to play this position (in the same tournament, in the same round, on the same day!) against Flohr. After 17 ♖b1? b4 18 f4 ♕d7 19 ♖a1 b3 (Geller-Flohr, USSR Ch (Moscow) 1951), White's uneasy mix of attack and defence had gone seriously astray, and he soon crumbled.

Directly switching from attack to passive defence rarely works. After all, the logic of a successful defence is that by covering your weak points, economically and efficiently, you are giving yourself room to seek out active methods of counterplay elsewhere on the board. *If you voluntarily relinquish the chance of attack that has been hard won by your previous play, you are abandoning the main goal of defence (beyond pure survival) – the chance to seek activity!* Sometimes during the course of an attack one has to resort to the occasional defensive move in order to deal with the opponent's direct threats, and this is normal and perfectly acceptable. What is not in order is suddenly to stop attacking and curl up when you see that the flow of play is going against you. Of course, if the position is objectively bad, playing to renew the attack will not necessarily save the position, but the opponent will still face various practical difficulties, and the chances of your opponent spilling the point or half-point will be increased.

When the first wave of the attack has exhausted itself, it often pays to start the second wave!

17...♘xd5?!

This move has been heavily criticized in various quarters, but Black is still better, and so the knight recapture can hardly be thought of as a game-threatening mistake. Black's real error comes later. However, the bishop recapture is more accurate, the point being that if after 17...♗xd5 White wants to establish a knight on e4, he will have to exchange light-squared bishops first. The removal of White's bishop on e2 would, however, release the pressure on Black's c4-pawn, and Black would then find it much easier to set in motion his queenside pawn-play with ...b4. After 17...♘xd5, it is much more difficult for Black to set his queenside pawn-majority in motion.

Smyslov in this game seems to err towards trying to defend by maintaining an ultra-solid position, at the cost of making slight sacrifices in pawn mobility. Such an approach carries the danger of leaving his opponent with permanent possession of the initiative. Black's biggest positional advantage, the one he should be using as a counter-balance to White's attack, is his two-pawn advantage. If this advantage comes in the form of a highly mobile pawn-mass, the defender has the luxury of being able to use the pawns in the middlegame, rather than trying to cling on to reach an endgame.

Regarding actual variations, Chernin in *ECO* gives 17...♗xd5 18 ♖d1 ♕c7 19 ♗f3 as unclear. Black can, however, strengthen his outpost on d5

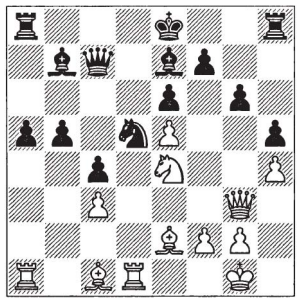
with 19...♕c6!, and the defences should hold. The main line is 20 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 (after 20...exd5, 21 e6?! ♗xg5! 22 exf7+ ♔xf7 23 ♗xg5 ♖he8, with the possibility of ...♖e6, is fully defensible for Black; White can keep attacking chances with 21 ♗e3) 21 ♘e4 b4!, and now:

1) 22 ♗g5 ♘xc3 23 ♘xc3 ♗xg5 24 hxg5 bxc3, and the likelihood is that White will regain two, but not all three, queenside pawns.

2) 22 cxb4 axb4 23 ♖xa8+ ♕xa8 24 ♗g5 conceals a vicious trap involving a queen sacrifice: 24...0-0?! 25 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 26 ♘f6+ ♔h8 27 ♖d7 ♘f5? 28 ♕xg6!, and mate follows. Black can avoid this with 27...♘g8, since 28 ♕xg6? ♕a1+ 29 ♔h2 ♕xe5+ destroys White's position. It is much simpler to play 24...♕a4, when Black should win.

18 ♖d1 ♕c7 19 ♘e4 *(D)*

B



19...0-0-0?!

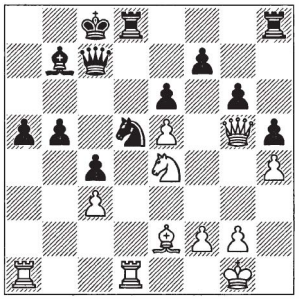
Black, with two extra pawns, ought still to be doing well. His most important remaining problem is the secure placement of his king. Since 19...0-0? loses an important pawn to 20 ♗xh5, the natural choice is between 19...0-0-0 and 19...♔f8. How though should Black decide where to place his king? Since the king is far safer on either flank than in the centre, king security is not the deciding factor. The coordination of Black's forces as a whole is more important, and more specifically the placement of the king in such a way that simultaneously the king may be satisfactorily defended and the queenside pawn-majority set in motion. To move from solid but passive defence to active counterplay Black will need to play ...b4; castling queenside is poor preparation for this! In making such an advance, it would be useful to have the rook still on the a-file, and positively harmful to have the king on the c-file.

Aside from its theoretical merits, 19...♔f8! is strong in practical terms, as it forces White to make a difficult and important decision on the next move. In view of the possibility of Black either further consolidating with ...♔g7, or counter-attacking with ...b4, White must act quickly, exchanging one of Black's minor pieces in order to force a weakness. But how? 20 ♘d6?! ♗xd6 21 exd6 ♕d7 22 ♕e5 f6! followed by ...♔f7 allows Black to consolidate on the kingside, and leaves the d6-pawn as a long-term weakness rather than a tower of strength. 20 ♘g5 sets up a threat of ♘xe6+, but 20...♗xg5! 21 ♗xg5 b4 leaves Black's queenside play well ahead of White's kingside play. The knight proves a more dangerous attacking piece than the bishop, since from a dark-squared outpost it attacks opposing pawns on the light squares, whereas the bishop would be attacking empty space.

20 ♗g5 keeps White's attack alive. 20...♗xg5 21 ♕xg5 ♕e7 22 ♘f6! is uncomfortable for Black, as are other lines where Black merely tries to cover his dark squares on the kingside. Black must try to make progress on the part of the board where he is better. 20...b4! is a big enough distraction to restrict White's kingside play. White's position is strong enough for the pawn advance on the queenside not to win outright, but the sacrifice of a pawn or two by Black might well have the effect of breaking White's kingside bind, perhaps leaving Black with the long-term positional advantage. Play might continue 21 ♗xe7+ ♕xe7 22 cxb4 (or 22 ♗xc4 ♘xc3 23 ♘xc3 bxc3 24 ♕xc3 ♔g7 25 ♖xa5 ♖xa5 26 ♕xa5 ♕xh4 ∓) 22...axb4 23 ♖xa8+ ♗xa8 24 ♗xc4 ♘b6 25 ♗d3 ♗xe4 ∓.

20 ♗g5! ♗xg5 21 ♕xg5 *(D)*

B



21...a4?

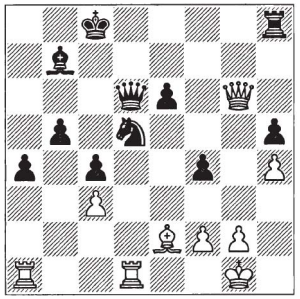
This is the real positional blunder. Black plays to consolidate his pawn-structure, and is prepared to sacrifice the exchange in order to achieve this, but the revised pawn-structure is too rigid. With Black unable to achieve anything on his strongest part of the board, White is free to pursue his initiative elsewhere.

The queenside pawns should be kept as a fighting unit with 21...b4!, despite the opening of lines against the black king. Black would have been afraid of precisely this exposure of the king, but the variations work out in his favour. After 22 cxb4 axb4, the obvious line is 23 ♘d6+ ♔b8 24 ♘xc4 (24 ♘xb7 ♔xb7 25 ♗f3 and now not 25...♖a8?? 26 ♖xd5 ♖xa1+ 27 ♖d1+ +–, but 25...♕c5! –+) 24...♘c3 25 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 26 ♗f1 ♖d4, and Black is set to win. White's most realistic saving chance is 23 ♖d4! ♘c3 (23...c3 24 ♖c4 and 23...♘b6 24 ♘d6+ carry much more risk for Black) 24 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 (24...♕xd8 25 ♘d6+ ♔b8 26 ♕e3 is dangerous) 25 ♘xc3 bxc3 26 ♕e3 ♖d5 27 f4! (27 ♗f3?! ♖xe5 28 ♗xb7+ ♔xb7 29 ♕a7+ {29 ♖a7+ ♔b8} 29...♔c8 30 ♕a8+ ♔d7, etc.), with reasonable prospects of picking up both Black's queenside pawns, or otherwise saving the game.

Smyslov's game was so good that it took several errors for him to drift into a poor position. Maybe it was psychologically easier for Petrosian to play this position, as he merely had to find 'only moves' to stay in the game, whereas Smyslov constantly faced serious challenges to pick the best move from a tempting array of alternatives. Nevertheless, Petrosian deserves great credit for keeping the game alive by doubling the gambit with 17 d5!, and for resolutely following the game through without any signs of psychological surrender.

22 ♕g3 f5 23 ♘d6+ ♖xd6 24 exd6 f4 25 ♕xg6 ♕xd6 *(D)*

W



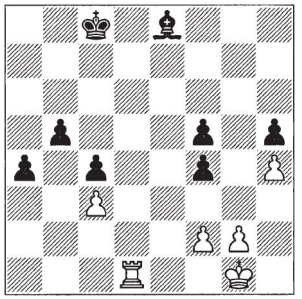
With this forcing sequence, Black has eliminated any possibility of a direct attack against his king, but he has played too many of his trumps. He is no longer ahead in material after his exchange sacrifice, and the extra pawns on the queenside have lost much of their effectiveness, while his kingside pawns are weak. The centre is under dispute, but White is no worse there.

Smyslov at his peak was a superb player with a remarkable sense of positional balance. His one real weakness was a tendency to become flustered occasionally when having to defend in tactically complicated positions; he would often seek a simple way out rather than going down the critical lines. In this game, his pursuit of a 'safe' position has led him step by step downhill. Every step to safety has meant that concessions have been made and opportunities foregone, the end result being that the king is safe, but the rest of his position is lifeless.

Meanwhile, part of the secret behind Petrosian's legendary defensive skill was his ability to sense precisely how much or how little could be conceded positionally in order to cover a particular aspect of the attack. If the opponent were to attack his king, Petrosian would not panic, and would not want to leave long-term weaknesses merely to beat off an attack. If that meant submitting himself to attack for a long time, then so be it. It is the game as a whole that has to be saved, not the king's dignity. There is an enormous contrast between the nervousness with which Smyslov deals with any remote threat to his king here, and the boldness with which Petrosian would send his king into active play if it was necessary to hold his position together, as in Game P10.

26 ♗f3 ♗c6 27 ♖e1 ♖e8 28 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 29 ♖ad1 ♕f5 30 ♕xf5 exf5 31 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 *(D)*

W



The board has now cleared considerably. Black's bishop is none too effective, and his queenside pawns are difficult to mobilize. But is this enough for White to win?

32 f3!

An example of the close linkage between accuracy in defence and general positional technique. White's prospects of winning this endgame depend on stabilizing the kingside – not necessarily so easy to see when all eyes

are directed towards Black's queenside pawn-majority.

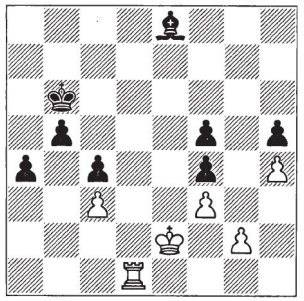
White avoids the transparent trap 32 ♖d4? ♗c6 33 ♖xf4 ♗e4 34 f3 ♗d3, when Black will queen a pawn.

A more plausible trap is if White tries to save a tempo with 32 ♔f1?!. Then 32...f3! splits White's kingside pawns, and if 33 g3?, then 33...♗c6 followed by ...♗e4 leaves *White* on the defensive. After 33 gxf3, Black need not follow the usual maxims about placing pawns on the opposite colour square to the bishop (33...f4?!), since there are considerable possibilities of mutual support between the bishop and pawns on the same colour square, provided the bishop is in front of the pawns. However, the immediate 33...♗c6?! is premature, as after 34 ♔e2 ♔c7 35 ♖g1! White is ready to invade on the kingside. 33...♔c7! 34 ♔e2 ♔b6 is safe enough though, since if White goes for Black's kingside pawns with the rook, Black's queenside pawns rush through (35 ♖g1?! ♔a5 36 ♔d2 {36 ♖g5? a3} 36...a3 37 ♔c2 ♗c6), whereas if the king moves to the queenside, ...♗c6 is awkward to meet.

Petrosian showed acute judgement in not allowing the pawn sacrifice, the more so since after the text-move everything seems finely balanced.

32...♔c7 33 ♔f2 ♔b6 34 ♔e2 *(D)*

B



34...♔a5?!

In endgames it rarely makes sense to play the king to the blind side of the pawns, unless checks need to be avoided. White is always on top after Smyslov's move.

34...♔c5!?, keeping the king on the open side of play, sets a vicious trap. 35 ♖b1 a3 36 ♔d2 b4 37 cxb4+ ♔d4 38 ♖a1 c3+ 39 ♔c1 ♔e3! 40 ♖xa3 ♔f2 and now after 41 ♖a8? ♗b5 42 ♖g8 ♗f1 43 ♔c2 ♗xg2 44 ♖xg2+ ♔xg2 45 b5 ♔xf3 46 b6 ♔g2 47 b7 f3 48 b8♕ f2 White's extra queen does not win the game! Instead, White can win comfortably enough by letting two kingside pawns go: 41 ♖xc3! ♔xg2 42 ♔d2 ♔g3 43 ♔e1 ♔xh4 44 ♔f2. While the winning line, taken in isolation, is convincing enough, there were perhaps enough false trails to have made the trap worth setting. Playing the positionally logical move would have left some slight practical chance for salvation – and when one is on the brink of defeat, 'practical chances' are all that remain.

35 ♖b1 a3 36 ♔d2 b4 37 cxb4+ ♔a4 38 ♔c3 a2 39 ♖a1 ♔a3 40 ♔xc4!

To be fair to Smyslov's decision on move 34, it should be pointed out that this rook sacrifice is the only way to win. It is not a difficult sac to make though, as Black's king will be well out of play, and White's king and pawns will overwhelm the bishop's defensive capacities.

40...♔b2 41 ♖e1 a1♕ 42 ♖xa1 ♔xa1 43 b5 ♗d7

The king and pawn endgame is an easy win for White, either now or after 43...♔b2 44 ♔c5 ♗xb5 45 ♔xb5.

44 b6 ♗c8 45 ♔d4 ♔b2 46 ♔e5 ♔c3 47 ♔xf4 ♔d4 48 ♔g5 ♔e5 49 ♔xh5 ♔f6 50 g4 ♗b7 51 ♔h6 1-0

Supplementary Games

Game P1.1
Veselovsky – Kudishevich
USSR 1969
Queen's Gambit, Slav Defence
(See note to Black's 11th move in the main game.)

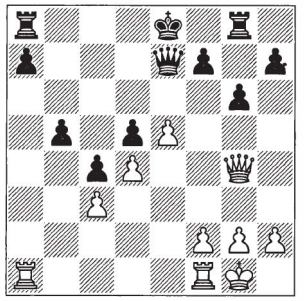
Game P1.2
Geller – Unzicker
Saltsjöbaden IZ 1952
Queen's Gambit, Slav Defence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 dxc4 5 e4 b5 6 e5 ♘d5 7 a4 e6 8 axb5 ♘xc3 9 bxc3 cxb5 10 ♘g5 ♗b7 11 ♕h5 g6 12 ♕g4 ♗e7 13 ♗e2 ♘d7 14 ♗f3 ♕c7?! 15 ♘e4 ♘b6 16 ♗h6 ♖g8

16...♘d5 17 ♗g5 0-0 18 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 19 ♘f6+ ± – Geller. A strange but effective sacrifice of the tempo; White does not want to play ♗g5 when an exchange on e4 is possible, and so he awaits ...♘d5.

17 ♗g5 ♗xe4 18 ♗xe4 ♘d5 19 ♗xd5 exd5 20 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 21 0-0 *(D)*

B



21...♔f8?

Black is a pawn up, and White has no massive threats, but it is difficult for Black both to keep his extra pawn and to get his pieces safely developed. If 21...♕e6?, then 22 ♕xe6+ fxe6 23 ♖fb1, and White wins one of the queenside pawns, emerging with much the better pawn-structure. How should Black defend, given that the attempt to castle by hand does not stem the pressure? The answer would be to return the extra pawn in such a way that it does the least damage to Black's pawn-structure – and the most damage to White's! 21...b4! 22 cxb4 ♕e6! is indicated, blunting some of the attack, and giving Black a protected passed pawn. Then 23 ♕h4 is answered by 23...♔d7! followed in due course by ...♖gb8. Or 23 ♕f3 ♔e7 24 ♖a5 ♖gd8! 25 ♖fa1 ♖d7 26 ♖a6 ♕f5 27 ♕xf5 gxf5. The endgame looks unappealing for Black, as he has relinquished his extra pawn, and his kingside pawns as well as his a-pawn are very weak. However, he has chances of staying in the game, or of doing even better than that, by putting pressure on the b-pawn and by reminding White that the only protected passed pawn belongs to Black; e.g., 28 b5 ♖b8 29 ♖1a5 ♖db7! 30 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 31 ♖xa7+ ♔f8 32 ♖a5? c3!, when suddenly White is losing! Geller, in *The Application of Chess Theory*, makes no mention of this idea. Imaginative defence can disrupt even the apparently smoothest of attacks.

22 ♖fb1 a6 23 ♕f3 ♕e6?!

23...♔g7 ± Geller.
24 ♕f6! ♕c8
The rook and pawn ending is lost.
25 f4 ♕b7 26 ♖a5 ♔e8 27 ♖ba1 b4 28 cxb4 ♕xb4 29 ♖xd5 ♕b7 30 e6 1-0

Game P2
Reshevsky – Petrosian
Zurich/Neuhausen Ct 1953
Nimzo-Indian Defence

Petrosian's first appearance at 'super-tournament' level was at the famed Candidates tournament of 1953. Petrosian was the youngest player in the tournament, and he started slowly with 2/6. He gradually clawed his way up the tournament table, and finished in fifth place with 15/28. Smyslov won the tournament by a wide margin, and was to tie a World Championship match with Botvinnik the following year.

Petrosian's highly distinctive playing style was already evident, both in its strengths and in its weaknesses. On the debit side, we notice a lack of direct aggression, a tendency, like the young Schlechter, to agree draws just as the position is starting to look promising, and also a relative lack of interest in opening theory. More positively, Petrosian displayed his prophylactic and defensive abilities in a wide variety of settings, abilities which ten years later were to make him World Champion. Petrosian's playing style evolved and matured in these ten years, but not perhaps in the direction that his supporters would have wished. Petrosian's games in 1953 were bright and lively, but as he approached his peak strength, his play became dominated by the view that the way to become World Champion was to avoid losing games, rather than to win them, so long, of course, that just a few wins were thrown in. Vasiliev's biography (*Tigran Petrosian: His Life and Games*) provides some insights into Petrosian's stylistic development. From the sporting point of view, we can hardly argue with Petrosian's approach, since he remained World Champion for six years. From the psychological point of view, his approach would have helped him get over some hard knocks; losing is not an experience that any chess-player wants to repeat, and Petrosian had the ability to cut such accidents to a minimum. From the scientific and artistic points of view, it is a matter of regret that he was so often content with colourless safety play. Petrosian could play some of the most interesting and original games of any World Champion, but he could also play some of the dreariest games.

This particular game was described by Bronstein as one of the tournament's jewels.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3

Nimzowitsch played his defence as an *alternative* to the Queen's Gambit

pawn formation, with an view to quick development, keeping a tight pawn-structure and contesting the centre through piece-play. By the early 1950s, however, the Rubinstein variation with 4 e3 had become the main line for White, Black replying with ...0-0, ...c5 and ...d5, the resulting position being more a cousin of the Queen's Gambit than anything Nimzowitschian.

More recently, the Capablanca system with 4 ♕c2 has come back into fashion, leaving Black a number of ways to contest White's pawn-centre (4...c5; 4...0-0 followed by ...b6; 4...♘c6 followed by ...d6 and ...e5) without resorting to ...d5.

4...0-0

The spectators that day must have had a wonderful time, because on one of the other boards there was another defensive classic, featuring a rook sacrifice to gain a tempo for the counter-attack, in Geller-Euwe (Game P2.1) after 4...c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3. Some have suggested that this was Euwe's greatest game.

5 ♗d3 d5

We reach the pseudo-Queen's Gambit.

6 ♘f3 c5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 a3 ♗xc3 9 bxc3 b6?!

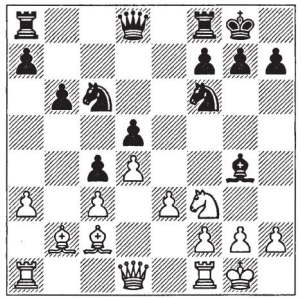
This was Petrosian's regular choice during the tournament, but it must be treated with suspicion. Having conceded the bishop-pair, Black needs a stable pawn-structure, which the text-move does not provide. This is not just a question of open positions versus closed positions, since if anything the position is more open after the standard, and sounder, 9...dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♕c7. The point is that knights are better positioned to influence events on key parts of the board if the pawn-structure is not subject to any sudden change.

10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♗b2

The possibility of White breaking up the position, to the benefit of his bishops, with dxc5 and c4, induces Black to close the position with ...c4. But then White can play for an e4 break. 11 ♘e5!? is also promising, and Taimanov inflicted a crushing defeat on Petrosian later on in the tournament with this line (Supplementary Game P2.2).

11...c4 12 ♗c2 ♗g4 *(D)*

W



13 ♕e1!

Black may now double White's pawns with 13...♗xf3 14 gxf3, but White's kingside would be basically solid, and he would have an extra pawn covering the centre, as well as chances of play along the g-file. The value of the bishop-pair is enhanced when the opponent has two knights rather than knight and bishop, because the defender cannot try to neutralize the bishop-pair by offering an exchange of bishops.

White has no realistic possibility of gaining active play *without* allowing this weakening of his pawn-structure. The voluntary concession in terms of pawn-structure is, however, worth making if the general harmony of the position is improved – a significant point for both attacker and defender.

13...♘e4

Petrosian fails to swallow the bait, but now White's knight is liberated, and Reshevsky can play for f3 and e4, as in the Taimanov-Petrosian game of a few rounds later.

14 ♘d2 ♘xd2?!

Estrin is cited in *ECO* as suggesting 14...♗f5!?. The self-pin is of no great concern for Black as it may quickly be released by ...♘xd2, gaining a tempo by the attack on the rook. Neither is the double exchange on e4 (15 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 16 ♗xe4 dxe4) any problem for Black, despite the apparent weakening of the pawns, and despite White's passed d-pawn, since Black may easily set up a blockade on the light squares (..♕d5, and ...♖fe8 in reply to f3), a blockade which White's remaining ineffective bishop can do little to influence. Also, the over-elaborate 15 ♘b1 achieves little after 15...♗g6.

Possibly White should try 15 ♗d1, preserving the bishop from exchange, but then his plan of central expansion would have been substantially slowed down.

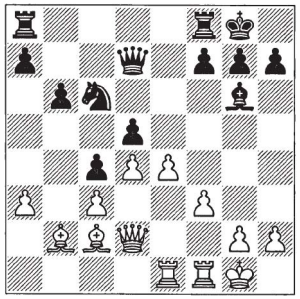
15 ♕xd2 ♗h5

As in the previous note, Black wants to challenge bishops on the b1-h7 diagonal. With this particular move-order, however, White has time to block the diagonal with a thematic e4 as soon as Black makes the challenge. In comparison with the previous note, this amounts to a considerable loss of time for Black.

Black's difficulties over the next few moves cannot solely be attributed to his choice of 9...b6.

16 f3 ♗g6 17 e4 ♕d7 18 ♖ae1 *(D)*

B



18...dxe4

Somewhat surprisingly, Petrosian was happy to reach this position a second time, several rounds later, against Smyslov (Supplementary Game P2.3). Instead of this surrender of the centre, Petrosian tried 18...f5, which proved to be even worse. For him to have saved the position against a technician of Smyslov's calibre was a superb defensive achievement, even if Smyslov missed a deeply hidden winning idea just before the end.

19 fxe4 ♖fe8 20 ♕f4 b5

Not so much to prevent a4 and ♗a3, as to prevent ♗a4.

21 ♗d1

So the bishop seeks another route into the game.

21...♖e7 22 ♗g4 ♕e8

With his last two moves, Black has ensured that he has e5 well covered. The point about this type of position is

that while Black can deal with d5 *or* e5, he is in danger of being squashed if he allows d5 *and* e5. Black's difficulty is that unless he can find time for ...f6, which is a weakening move, he cannot prevent White from playing either d5 or e5. What Black must do is to ensure that if White plays e5, he can blockade the d5-square, while if White plays d5 he can blockade the e5-square.

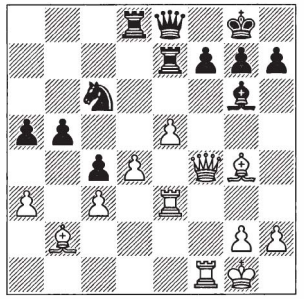
Ten years later, Petrosian was able to score a decisive win in the World Championship against Botvinnik by successfully restraining a central pawn couple (Game P4 below). Reshevsky's central play here is more dangerous.

23 e5 a5

Since there is enough firepower on e5 to delay d5, Black takes a move to set up counterplay on the queenside, and prepares to meet a possible a4 with ...b4. Any such counterplay will take a long time to emerge, but it will be slower still if Black does not take his occasional opportunities to play a queenside move.

24 ♖e3 ♖d8 *(D)*

W



25 ♖fe1?!

White has a massive position; of that there can be no doubt. It is easy enough to assume that such positions will win almost of their own volition if the player simply plays natural moves (such as doubling rooks behind a passed pawn), but against a skilful defender who will pounce at any opportunity, great accuracy is required.

I doubt whether Reshevsky paid great attention to Petrosian's exchange sacrifice. It is a possibility, naturally, but the player the exchange up and no pawns down would generally expect to win the game through normal technique. If Reshevsky had fully attuned himself to what Petrosian was thinking, he would have sought more precise ways of handling the position.

25 ♗f3 comes to mind, cutting across Black's plan of ...♖e6 followed by ...♘e7-d5, since 25..♖e6? is met by 26 d5! ♖xe5 27 ♖fe1 ♖xe3 28 ♖xe3 ♘e7 29 d6 winning a piece. If instead 25...b4 26 axb4 axb4, White reverts to the game plan with 27 ♖fe1, and d5 will soon follow, White's central pawns having more impact than Black's queenside pawns. All well so far, but Black improves with 25..f6! 26 exf6 (26 ♗xc6 soon transposes; 26 e6 ♖xe6 27 ♖xe6 ♕xe6 28 d5 ♖xd5 gives Black two pawns and a secure position for the exchange – a good bargain) 26..♖xe3 27 ♗xc6 (27 f7+? ♗xf7 28 ♗xc6 ♕e7 ∓) 27...♕xc6 (27...♕e6?? 28 ♕c7 +–) 28 f7+ ♔f8 29 ♕xe3 ♗xf7 and Black is over the worst.

Another try is 25 h4!?, as suggested by Bronstein. White opens up a second front for the attack before Black has time to consolidate on the first front. It would not be pleasant for Black if White were allowed to play h5, which sets up possibilities of attack

against both f7 (for which the rook on f1 is useful where it is) and g7. 25...f6! 26 e6 is a big step forward for White's pawn, although maybe the position is defensible; the two passed pawns are annoying, but at least they do not march in step.

Perhaps the clearest plan is to double rooks, not on the semi-closed e-file but rather on the semi-open f-file. 25 ♖ef3!? prevents ...f6, and makes it much more difficult for Black to play ...♖e6, given the pressure on f7.

25...♖e6!!

One memorable move makes the whole game memorable. Petrosian was a great connoisseur of the defensive exchange sacrifice. His intention here is to create an unbreakable blockade on the light squares by manoeuvring a knight to d5. This, he argues, is fully worth the exchange.

Black is helped by the asymmetrical pawn configuration, which obviates the standard plan of doubling up on an open file and exchanging a pair of rooks. White will not be able to do anything on the b-file, and on the f-file, the only other open line available for a white rook, all the entry squares are well guarded.

26 a4

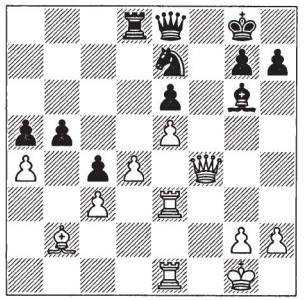
It is in White's interests to break open Black's queenside pawns, but here he only half succeeds in his aims. If now 26...b4?, then 27 d5 ♖xd5 28 ♗xe6 fxe6 29 ♕xc4 (Bronstein) and Black's position collapses. Petrosian is not so easily distracted.

26...♘e7 27 ♗xe6 fxe6 *(D)*

28 ♕f1?!

Black aims to take the initiative after ...♘d5 and ...b4, and so Reshevsky

W



brings his queen to a square from which c4 may be watched. There is an obvious implication that White is prepared to counter-sacrifice the exchange on d3 after ...♗d3, thereby acknowledging the soundness of Petrosian's defensive idea.

One wonders whether White should be so trusting. Bronstein notes that 28 ♕f2 ♘d5 29 ♖f3 b4 is good for Black, but it must surely be more accurate to play 28 ♖f3 ♘d5 29 ♕d2, and if 29...b4, then 30 ♖ef1, with the possible further continuation 30...♕xa4 31 h4. This seems to be the only good way to make use of the extra exchange; double up on the f-file, and use the pressure this gives as the basis for a later kingside attack. Black's queenside pawns look fearsome, and Reshevsky presumably was worried about them, but the mechanics of setting up connected passed pawns on a3 and b3 are not so easy, particularly in view of the likelihood that ...b3 will immediately allow White's bishop back into the game with ♗a3.

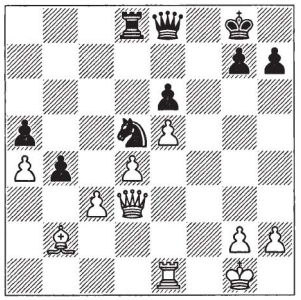
Good defensive play often involves an element of bluff. One of the best ways of putting the attacker off his stride is to confront him with the fear

that he will lose control, and get the worse of a position where once he had been comfortably better. If the attacker then starts looking for a safe way out, that is a moral victory for the defender!

Naturally this should not be taken to imply that Petrosian's sacrifice was 'unsound' or 'psychological', since he would have been flattened if he had not given up the exchange, and the line cited in this note is not a conclusive win for White. It is worth keeping in mind that defence in an awkward position is a struggle between two human chess-players, and not simply a technical exercise.

28...♘d5 29 ♖f3 ♗d3 30 ♖xd3 cxd3 31 ♕xd3 b4 *(D)*

W



With this the draw is secured, despite the pawn deficit, since the knight is so firmly entrenched on d5 and the white bishop is ineffective. If anything, Black might be better.

32 cxb4

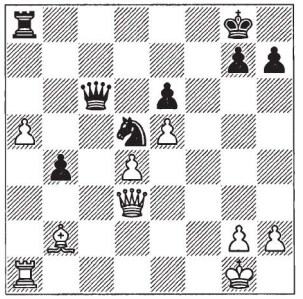
32 c4?! would be tempting fate. Bronstein gives 32...♘b6, and then 33 ♖c1 ♘xa4 34 ♗a1 ♕c6 or 33 d5 exd5 34 c5 ♘xa4 35 ♗d4 ♖c8. In either case, Black's connected outside passed pawns are more effective in the long run than White's well-blockaded central pawns.

32...axb4

All three captures on the queenside are safe, but this one gives the bonus of annoying White with a mobile passed pawn.

33 a5 ♖a8 34 ♖a1 ♕c6 *(D)*

W



35 ♗c1

White must not push his passed pawn too soon: 35 a6? ♘f4 36 ♕f3 (36 ♕d2 g5 ∓) 36...♕xf3 37 gxf3 ♘d3 38 ♗c1 b3 ∓.

35...♕c7

This gives the initial impression of losing a tempo, in that White wants to advance the a-pawn anyway, but the natural waiting move 35...h6 allows 36 ♗xh6, with a perpetual check if Black captures.

Bronstein notes that the fresh exchange sacrifice with 35...♖xa5?! leads nowhere, and merely involves fresh risk.

36 a6 ♕b6

Now Black's passed pawn is free to advance. The position appears to be in equilibrium however, as neither side can divert resources to push their

against both f7 (for which the rook on f1 is useful where it is) and g7. 25...f6! 26 e6 is a big step forward for White's pawn, although maybe the position is defensible; the two passed pawns are annoying, but at least they do not march in step.

Perhaps the clearest plan is to double rooks, not on the semi-closed e-file but rather on the semi-open f-file. 25 ♖ef3!? prevents ...f6, and makes it much more difficult for Black to play ...♖e6, given the pressure on f7.

25...♖e6!!

One memorable move makes the whole game memorable. Petrosian was a great connoisseur of the defensive exchange sacrifice. His intention here is to create an unbreakable blockade on the light squares by manoeuvring a knight to d5. This, he argues, is fully worth the exchange.

Black is helped by the asymmetrical pawn configuration, which obviates the standard plan of doubling up on an open file and exchanging a pair of rooks. White will not be able to do anything on the b-file, and on the f-file, the only other open line available for a white rook, all the entry squares are well guarded.

26 a4

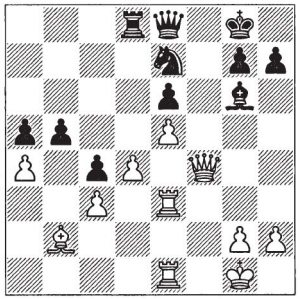
It is in White's interests to break open Black's queenside pawns, but here he only half succeeds in his aims. If now 26...b4?, then 27 d5 ♖xd5 28 ♗xe6 fxe6 29 ♕xc4 (Bronstein) and Black's position collapses. Petrosian is not so easily distracted.

26...♘e7 27 ♗xe6 fxe6 *(D)*

28 ♕f1?!

Black aims to take the initiative after ...♘d5 and ...b4, and so Reshevsky

W



brings his queen to a square from which c4 may be watched. There is an obvious implication that White is prepared to counter-sacrifice the exchange on d3 after ...♗d3, thereby acknowledging the soundness of Petrosian's defensive idea.

One wonders whether White should be so trusting. Bronstein notes that 28 ♕f2 ♘d5 29 ♖f3 b4 is good for Black, but it must surely be more accurate to play 28 ♖f3 ♘d5 29 ♕d2, and if 29...b4, then 30 ♖ef1, with the possible further continuation 30...♕xa4 31 h4. This seems to be the only good way to make use of the extra exchange; double up on the f-file, and use the pressure this gives as the basis for a later kingside attack. Black's queenside pawns look fearsome, and Reshevsky presumably was worried about them, but the mechanics of setting up connected passed pawns on a3 and b3 are not so easy, particularly in view of the likelihood that ...b3 will immediately allow White's bishop back into the game with ♗a3.

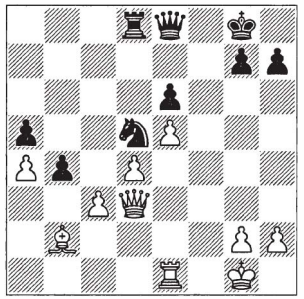
Good defensive play often involves an element of bluff. One of the best ways of putting the attacker off his stride is to confront him with the fear

that he will lose control, and get the worse of a position where once he had been comfortably better. If the attacker then starts looking for a safe way out, that is a moral victory for the defender!

Naturally this should not be taken to imply that Petrosian's sacrifice was 'unsound' or 'psychological', since he would have been flattened if he had not given up the exchange, and the line cited in this note is not a conclusive win for White. It is worth keeping in mind that defence in an awkward position is a struggle between two human chess-players, and not simply a technical exercise.

28...♘d5 29 ♖f3 ♗d3 30 ♖xd3 cxd3 31 ♕xd3 b4 *(D)*

W



With this the draw is secured, despite the pawn deficit, since the knight is so firmly entrenched on d5 and the white bishop is ineffective. If anything, Black might be better.

32 cxb4

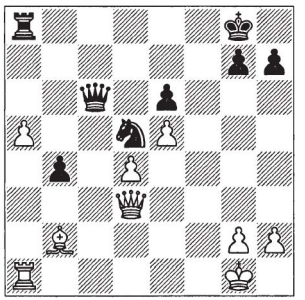
32 c4?! would be tempting fate. Bronstein gives 32...♘b6, and then 33 ♖c1 ♘xa4 34 ♗a1 ♕c6 or 33 d5 exd5 34 c5 ♘xa4 35 ♗d4 ♖c8. In either case, Black's connected outside passed pawns are more effective in the long run than White's well-blockaded central pawns.

32...axb4

All three captures on the queenside are safe, but this one gives the bonus of annoying White with a mobile passed pawn.

33 a5 ♖a8 34 ♖a1 ♕c6 *(D)*

W



35 ♗c1

White must not push his passed pawn too soon: 35 a6? ♘f4 36 ♕f3 (36 ♕d2 g5 ∓) 36...♕xf3 37 gxf3 ♘d3 38 ♗c1 b3 ∓.

35...♕c7

This gives the initial impression of losing a tempo, in that White wants to advance the a-pawn anyway, but the natural waiting move 35...h6 allows 36 ♗xh6, with a perpetual check if Black captures.

Bronstein notes that the fresh exchange sacrifice with 35...♖xa5?! leads nowhere, and merely involves fresh risk.

36 a6 ♕b6

Now Black's passed pawn is free to advance. The position appears to be in equilibrium however, as neither side can divert resources to push their

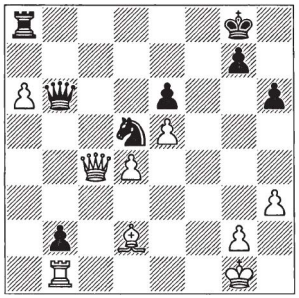
outside passed pawn without giving the opposing passed pawn a clear run.

37 ♗d2?!

Giving the b-pawn too much freedom. 37 h3 followed by ♔h2 is safer; removing the king from the back rank avoids various tactical tricks.

37...b3 38 ♕c4 h6 39 h3 b2 40 ♖b1 *(D)*

B



40...♔h8?!

To err is human, particularly on the last move of the time-control. Black plays a waiting move, giving White time to reposition his bishop, but he misses a favourable chance to play 40...♕xa6!. Then 41 ♕xa6 ♖xa6 42 ♖xb2 ♖a4 wins the d-pawn and re-establishes the material balance. Black is better because his knight completely overshadows White's bishop, and because White's isolated pawn on e5 is in great danger of dropping, whereas Black's pawn on e6 is easily protected. It is difficult to say whether there are any serious winning chances, but at the very least White could be forced to defend the endgame for several moves. Probably White should hold, given that all the pawns are on the kingside, making it easier to deal with any passed pawn of Black's that might emerge. If 41 ♕c2 ♕b6!, White is left with no real choice other than to enter the same unfavourable but tenable endgame with 42 ♕xb2 ♕xb2 43 ♖xb2 ♖a4.

41 ♗e1 ½-½

Agreed drawn during the adjournment interval. Bronstein suggested that Black was still a touch better, but really the best chance was missed a move earlier.

Supplementary Games

Game P2.1
Geller – Euwe
Zurich/Neuhausen Ct 1953
Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 5 a3

In the style of the 1920s. 5 ♗d3!?; 5 ♘e2!?.

5...♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 b6 7 ♗d3 ♗b7 8 f3 ♘c6 9 ♘e2 0-0 10 0-0 ♘a5!?

Uncompromisingly setting his sights on the front c-pawn. 10...d6 11 ♘g3 ♕d7 12 ♕e2 ♘a5 13 ♖d1 ♖ad8 = Panagopoulos-Porreca, Dubrovnik OL 1950, cited in *ECO*, is a more cautious approach.

11 e4 ♘e8 12 ♘g3 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♖c8

White's c-pawn is fatally weak, but he has the time to set up a vicious four-pawn attack.

14 f4 ♘xc4 15 f5 f6

White threatened f6, and on ...♘xf6, then ♗g5. Burgess, in *The Mammoth Book of the World's Greatest Chess Games*, suggests that 15...b5 might even so have been possible. After 16 f6!? ♘xf6 17 ♗g5 ♕b6, the most attractive line is 18 ♖xf6 ♕xd4+ 19 ♖f2 ♘b2!. Possibly White has to continue the attack with 16 e5!?.

16 ♖f4 b5!

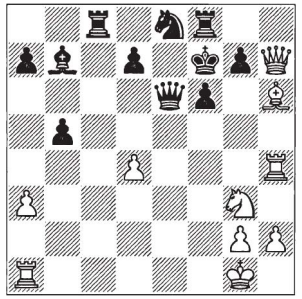
A second vital pawn-push, in Lasker style. After improving his worst weakness voluntarily on the kingside, he proceeds with a policy of defending with a bare minimum of pieces on the kingside, and generating active play where he is strongest, on the queenside. White succeeds in breaking through on the kingside, but because Black is active on the queenside and in the centre, this incursion is far from decisive.

17 ♖h4 ♕b6 18 e5 ♘xe5 19 fxe6 ♘xd3 20 ♕xd3 ♕xe6

Euwe, a great student of Steinitz's theories, takes the opportunity to defend the proposition that the king is able to look after himself.

21 ♕xh7+ ♔f7 22 ♗h6 *(D)*

B



How does Black prevent White from breaking through on g7? The answer is by breaking through on g2 first! It is noticeable in what follows that the knight on e8 provides better cover for Black's king than any of the white minor pieces is able to do for the white king. The game finished:

22...♖h8!?

Startling and very memorable, but possibly not the best.

23 ♕xh8 ♖c2!

The point of the sacrifice. Black gains a tempo for the counter-attack.

24 ♖c1? ♖xg2+ 25 ♔f1 ♕b3 26 ♔e1 ♕f3 0-1

In view of inevitable mate.

The quality of White's defence was not up to the quality of Black's. Instead of the tame 24 ♖c1?, White can, astonishingly, hold, or come close to it, with Bronstein's suggestion of 24 d5!!, and now:

1) 24...♕xd5? 25 ♖e4, and if Black continues 25...♕c5+, then 26 ♗e3.

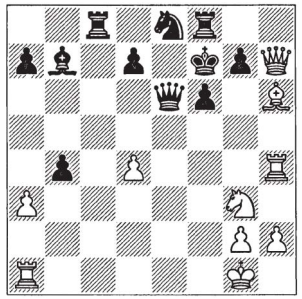
2) 24...♕b6+ 25 ♔h1 ♕f2 26 ♖g1 ♗xd5 27 ♖e4!.

3) 24...♗xd5 25 ♖d1! ♖xg2+ 26 ♔f1. Here White's defence depends on the coordination of his rooks and knights, which can just about block off all the critical lines; for example, 26...♕b6?! 27 ♖dd4. After 26...gxh6 27 ♕xh6, Bronstein suggests that Black still has winning chances due to the exposed position of White's king, but there is perhaps the counter-argument that White's pieces are starting to coordinate again. After, for example, 27...♗f3 28 ♖d2 Black's attack starts to run out of steam.

This is a superb example of 'defence by throwing grit into the works', and raises the suggestion that 22...♖h8 might not have been the best. Bronstein suggests that from the diagram position the steady but unexciting move 22...♖c4 is probably stronger,

presumably relying on the extra pawn. There is, however, an interesting idea which can only be appreciated by someone who has seen through the variations above. Black plays the apparently purposeless 22...b4!? *(D)*.

W



If White replies 23 axb4, then only now does Black continue 23...♖h8!! 24 ♕xh8 ♖c2 25 d5 ♗xd5 26 ♖d1 ♖xg2+ 27 ♔f1 ♕a6+! (now we see the point behind ...b4) 28 ♔e1 ♖g1+ 29 ♔d2 ♕a2+ regaining the rook and keeping a winning attack. Some of the most beautiful chess ideas are so deeply hidden that it is difficult to imagine how mortal man could possibly find them over the board. No process of identifying candidate moves to start with, then systematically working through them, could have produced this idea; one would have to analyse 22...♖h8 in its ramifications, then go straight back to the starting position, to be able to see the point.

However, even this is not the last word. One would think that Black's b-pawn is too strong to be ignored, but after 23 ♖f1! ♖h8 24 ♕xh8 ♖c2, the Laskerian 25 ♖xf6+! (in fact suggested by Burgess) keeps the game very much alive. After 25...♔xf6 26 ♗g5+! (26 ♕f8+? ♔g6) 26...♔xg5 27 ♖h5+ ♔f4? 28 ♖f5+ (28 ♖h4+? ♔e3 29 ♘f1+ ♔e2 30 ♕h5+ ♔e1 −+) 28...♔e3 29 ♖e5+ ♕xe5 30 dxe5 bxa3 Black has a draw at best, so 27...♔g4 is better, with perpetual check. Black could also draw by 23...b3 24 ♘f5 ♕e2 25 ♖f2 ♕e1+ forcing a repetition.

Game P2.2
Taimanov – Petrosian
Zurich/Neuhausen Ct 1953
Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♗d3 d5 6 ♘f3 c5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 a3 ♗xc3 9 bxc3 b6?! 10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♘e5!? ♕c7 12 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 13 f3 ♗e6 14 ♕e1 ♘d7 15 e4 *(D)*

Taimanov was later to prefer 15 ♖a2; for example, 15...f5 16 h3 c4 17 ♗b1 b5 18 g4 ♘b6 19 ♖g2 and White holds a clear advantage, Taimanov-Bagirov, Tbilisi 1957.

B

15...c4?

Petrosian's defensive instincts for once fail him. Removing the pawn tension means that there is nothing to stop White rolling forward on the kingside. Bronstein suggests 15...f5!, and if 16 e5 then 16...b5 with the idea of creating a knight outpost on c4. If 16 c4, Bronstein notes that Black is fine after 16...fxe4 17 fxe4 dxc4 18 d5 ♕d6; for example, 19 ♗xc4 ♘e5!, 19 dxe6 ♕xd3 20 exd7 ♖xf1+ 21 ♕xf1 ♕d4+ or 19 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 20 dxe6 ♘e5!.

16 ♗c2 f5 17 e5 ♖f7 18 a4 a5 19 f4 b5 20 axb5 ♕xb5 21 ♗a3 ♘b6 22 ♕h4 ♕e8 23 ♖f3 ♘c8 24 ♗a4 ♖d7

An involuntary exchange sacrifice. White replies with a queen sacrifice.

25 ♖b1 ♕d8 26 ♗xd7 ♕xd7

Everything collapses after 26...♕xh4 27 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 28 ♗xd5.

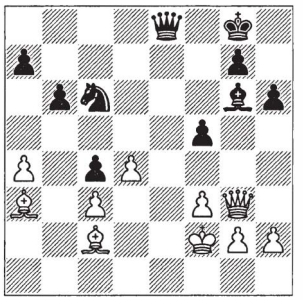
27 ♖g3 ♘a7 28 ♗e7 ♗f7 29 ♕g5 ♗g6 30 h4 ♘c6 31 ♗a3 ♘d8 32 h5 ♘e6 33 ♕h4 ♗f7 34 h6 g6 35 ♕f6 ♕d8 36 ♗e7 ♕c7 37 ♖xg6+ hxg6 38 h7+ ♔xh7 39 ♕xf7+ ♘g7 40 ♔f2 1-0

Petrosian, despite his colossal reputation for positional hyper-subtlety, was occasionally vulnerable to straightforward and vigorous play. This was to cost him dearly in the second half of his match against Fischer in 1971, and Portisch several times was able to take advantage of this weak link. Several other games, including this one, may be cited. Of his difficulties against Portisch, Petrosian noted that he always had the feeling that his opponent knew everything and had seen everything in the opening, "whereas I am painstakingly trying to find some original plan at the board" (quoted in *World Champions Teach Chess*, Estrin and Romanov). One senses that just as Lasker was convinced that there were few positions so bad that no possibility of constructive defence presents itself, so Petrosian was also heavily reliant on finding difficult and paradoxical resources in uncomfortable positions. Sometimes the opponent plays so logically and remorselessly that these resources are never allowed to surface.

Game P2.3
Smyslov – Petrosian
Zurich/Neuhausen Ct 1953
Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♗d3 d5 6 ♘f3 c5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 a3 ♗xc3 9 bxc3 b6?! 10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♗b2 c4 12 ♗c2 ♗g4 13 ♕e1 ♘e4 14 ♘d2 ♘xd2?! 15 ♕xd2 ♗h5 16 f3 ♗g6 17 e4 ♕d7 18 ♖ae1 f5?! 19 exd5 ♕xd5 20 a4 ♖fe8 21 ♕g5 ♕f7 22 ♗a3 h6 23 ♕g3 ♖xe1 24 ♖xe1 ♖e8 25 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 26 ♔f2 *(D)*

B



26...♘a5!

White's bishop-pair dominates, and Black has several weak pawns. There is also a danger that White's d-pawn will run. Black sees his only realistic chance as being to get at the a-pawn, not just in order to win the pawn, but also to penetrate with his queen.

27 ♕f4 ♘b3 28 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 29 ♕xf5 ♕xa4

If White wants to win, he must enter a race between his 'unstoppable' d-pawn and Black's counterplay against the white king. Smyslov gave several checks here to bring the time-control closer.

30 ♕f8+ ♔h7 31 ♕f5+ ♔g8 32 ♕e6+ ♔h7 33 ♕e4+ ♔g8 34 ♕a8+ ♔h7 35 ♕e4+ ♔g8 36 ♕d5+ ♔h7

White must vary, as either 37 ♕e4+ or 37 ♕f5+ would allow Black to claim threefold repetition of position.

37 ♗e7 ♘c1 38 ♕f5+ ♔g8 39 ♕f8+ ♔h7 40 ♕f5+ ♔g8 41 d5 ♕a2+ 42 ♔g3 ♕d2 43 d6 ♕e1+ 44 ♔g4 ♘d3 45 ♕d5+

45 d7 h5+! 46 ♔xh5 ♕xe7 47 ♕d5+ ♔h7 48 d8♕ ♘f4+.

45...♔h7 46 d7 ♕e5!

A terrific resource in an apparently resignable position. Now 47 ♕xe5? ♘xe5+ allows Black to win the white passed pawn, while 47 d8♕?? is a blunder allowing 47...♘f2+ 48 ♔h4 ♕xh2#.

47 ♕xd3+?!

Settling for a draw. Bronstein notes that it was several months before anyone saw 47 ♕d6!!, with an X-ray defence of h2 that destroys Black's counterplay against the white king, and allows White to queen the pawn in peace. If the win was objectively there, it was there from an early stage; there is nothing much a defender can ultimately do about this, if trying to recover from a poor position. The best that can be hoped for is to be able, through resolute play, to be able to keep setting practical problems. If such problems remain unsolved until months after the game, then so much the better!

47...cxd3 48 d8♕ ½-½

Game P3
Dückstein – Petrosian
Varna OL 1962
Caro-Kann Defence

There is much more that can be said and written about Petrosian in the 1950s, but pressure of space, and the belief that Petrosian's clashes with Spassky and Fischer are of special interest, means that there is a gap in the game sequence. Petrosian's style evolved considerably in the intervening years. The first two featured games, against Smyslov in 1951 and Reshevsky in 1953, show Petrosian playing adventurously in the opening, getting into trouble, and using great resourcefulness in escaping from trouble. Many other games, including outstanding youthful saves against Keres and Botvinnik, add weight to this impression. As Petrosian's play matured, and as it became more realistic for him to think about launching a serious assault on the supreme title, he paid more attention to the question of how to avoid getting into bad positions in the first place. He reasoned that while

wins are nice to have, every loss obliterates a previous win, and it was a chancy business aiming for the summit taking risks. If he could avoid ever losing a game, he asked himself, then why should any man be regarded a better player than him? And why should he not become World Champion himself? Thus the 'Iron Tigran' was born.

This ultra-minimalist approach carried Petrosian through both the Stockholm Interzonal (+8 =14) and the Curaçao Candidates (+8 =19) without defeat, and qualified him to play a match against Botvinnik. After these heavy-duty events, the Varna Olympiad must almost have come as light relief. In those days, the question was not whether the Soviet team would win, but by what margin. Few western teams could even field a grandmaster, whereas the Soviets could select a team of world champions, ex-champions and candidates. It was just this margin of skill that meant that Petrosian could not content himself with draws. The need to score some victories forced him to adopt a more open and provocative style of play. The following game against an Austrian master, which has been used in several textbooks, shows aspects of both the young Petrosian, and the iron Tigran; there is a fascinating mix of provocation and prophylaxis.

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♗f5 5 ♘g3 ♗g6 6 ♘f3

Nowadays, White generally prefers to gain a little space on the kingside first, with 6 h4 h6 7 ♘f3. Naturally this will make it more difficult for White to castle kingside, and both players tend to castle queenside, the main line being 7...♘d7 8 h5 ♗h7 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 ♕c7 11 ♗d2 e6 12 0-0-0.

There can of course be little wrong with simple piece development in a position with a sound pawn-structure, but experience shows that such systems often have less bite. ...h6 for Black is a greater concession in this line than h4 for White.

6...♘d7 7 ♗d3

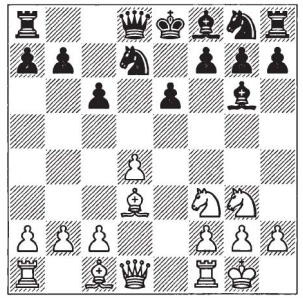
7 h4 was still possible. Also, 7 ♗c4 ♘gf6 8 0-0 e6 9 ♘g5!? (9 ♕e2) 9...h6 10 ♘h3 ♗d6 11 ♘f4 ♗xf4 12 ♗xf4 ♘d5 = Tal-Petrosian, USSR 1961.

7...e6

Black does not have the luxury of being able to delay the exchange of bishops in the h4 h6 lines.

8 0-0 *(D)*

B



8...♕c7!?

Deliberately provocative play, a standard ploy when meeting a less accomplished opponent. Black hopes to create a little uncertainty in his opponent's mind. White would presumably be happy enough to take a draw off his illustrious opponent, but he is forced

to ask himself now whether he should play for more – and indeed whether he should play for a slight positional advantage, or whether he should be more ambitious and play for a direct attack on the king, which will soon be on the queenside. White's uncertainty shows in the next few moves, in which he never appears quite sure whether he should attack or consolidate.

Black could also play it with a straight bat with 8...♘gf6, and this is probably stronger. *ECO* cites a few games where Spassky as White was unable to establish any sort of advantage; for example, 9 c4 ♗e7 10 b3 0-0 11 ♗b2 ♕b6 12 ♗xg6 hxg6 13 ♖e1 ♖fe8 14 ♕c2 c5 15 a3 a5 = Spassky-Portisch, Montreal 1979. In such lines it is not so easy for Black to play for a win against an opponent who is content with a draw. We have a paradox, often seen in Lasker's games, that it can be easier to play for a win in a slightly inferior position than from a level position.

9 c4

White is content to reply with a natural space-gaining move, although there is the danger that at some stage this will open him up for a counter-blow against d4.

9 ♗xg6 hxg6 10 ♘g5!? is an interesting alternative, forcing Black to find another plan of development. The weakness on f7 turns out to be quite awkward to cover; if 10...♘h6 then 11 ♕f3, and Black will have one or two problems in bringing his king into safety and completing his development.

9...0-0-0 10 ♗xg6

Giving Black counterplay along the half-open h-file, but White can live with this, and meanwhile he need not worry about any pressure against d3.

10...hxg6 11 ♕a4?!

This lacks subtlety; the queen soon finds herself off-centre and in need of redeployment. Clarke, in his book on Petrosian's games, suggests 11 ♕e2 followed by ♗d2, which is a reasonable idea, but I would wish to make a slight modification. White is not yet totally sure where he wants the queen (a4 and e2 being the main candidate squares), and so it would make sense to develop the bishop first: 11 ♗d2!, which has the additional virtue of preparing b4 without loss of time. If Black reacts violently in the centre, with ...c5 or ...e5, then ♕a4, gaining a tempo with the attack on a7, is a powerful reply; for example, 11...e5 12 ♕a4 exd4 13 ♕xa7 c5 14 b4, and White is shaping up for an attack against the king. On quieter play, White may want to revert to a ♕e2 development.

11...♔b8

One does not have to be a Petrosian to play such a move. Black is no longer worse. The position of his king is secure enough for him not to have to worry about an attack by pieces alone; his only worry is an attack by pieces *and* pawns. As the text shows, such an attack takes a few moves to arrange. Meanwhile Black may aim for counterplay in the centre and on the kingside.

12 b4 ♘h6

The best square for the knight is clearly f5.

13 ♕b3

A voluntary retreat such as this bears out the point made in the note to White's 11th. White ought to have

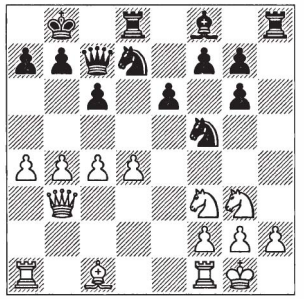
been able to arrange his pieces and pawns in such a way that the queen did not have to move twice.

13...♘f5 14 a4 *(D)*

Clarke suggests that 14 ♗b2, holding back Black's central pawn-break, is more relevant to the needs of the position. The bishop would then be passively placed however, and Black would no longer have to worry about any pressure by White along the h2-b8 diagonal. 14...♘f6! should be fully satisfactory for Black, and if, for example, 15 ♖fd1, then 15...♗d6 16 ♘e5 ♖h4!, when Black's attack moves faster.

The 'Caro-Slav' pawn formation again demonstrates its essential solidity.

B



14...e5!

Classic positional play, according to the teachings of Steinitz that an attack on the flank is best met, if possible, by play in the centre.

15 dxe5

If 15 d5?, Clarke gives 15...cxd5 16 cxd5 ♘b6 with play against the isolated pawn. The tactical approach with 15...e4 looks even stronger: 16 ♘xe4 (16 dxc6 exf3 17 cxd7 ♘xd4 18 ♕e3 ♘e2+ 19 ♔h1 ♗d6 with a winning attack) 16...♘d4 17 d6 ♗xd6 18 ♘xd4 ♗xh2+ 19 ♔h1 ♗g1+ 20 ♔xg1 ♕h2#.

15...♘xe5 16 ♘xe5

16 ♗f4 ♗d6 17 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 ∓ – Clarke. Although play is very fluid, with an open centre making exchanges likely, Black has a more secure pawn-structure, and a little more grip on the centre. Black can, for example, protect d5 with a pawn, while White has no similar protection possible for d4. It makes sense for White to keep his bishop; the black king and queen are both lined up on a diagonal potentially controllable by the bishop, while defensively the bishop provides some cover for the d4-square.

16...♕xe5 17 ♗b2 ♕c7 18 c5? *(D)*

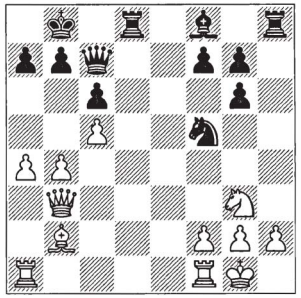
Petrosian has handled the play a little more forcefully and consistently than his opponent. This is not necessarily enough to give him real winning chances, as Petrosian started off with the disadvantage of the black pieces. It is often extremely difficult to assess the flow of play when this has happened. Is Black better? Or is it equal? Or does White, despite everything, still hold a slight edge? Misjudgements become very easy to make, and here Dückstein seems to overestimate his position, playing for an attack when the requisite forces are not quite there.

Clarke prefers 18 ♖ad1 "with a keen and evenly balanced contest ahead". There is no intrinsic reason why White should *necessarily* be worse. But after 18...♖xd1 19 ♖xd1, it is not necessarily going to be a case for Black of 'get the bishop out, exchange rooks on the d-file and agree a draw' either. Black possesses a minor but irritating pawn

weakness on g7, while White, if he is not careful, could have problems with his h-pawn and his queenside pawns. The mobility of White's queen and knight is already restricted. The obvious move for Black is 19...♗e7, but after 20 c5 (better timed!) the pawn on f7 is under attack, which is annoying for Black. 19...c5! 20 b5 ♗d6 seems to give Black the edge though.

Possibly White should try 18 a5! in order to minimize the effect of any pawn-break threat Black might have on the queenside.

B



18...a5!!

One of Petrosian's most celebrated moves.

The hypermoderns once rightly used to take great pleasure in breaking the rules, or should we say the dogmas, of positional chess. There is just as much creativity, just as much significance, in finding exceptions to the general rules, in positional chess as in tactical chess. To be a good positional player, you need to play intelligently and not fall victim to routine.

White is attacking on the queenside and Black is attacking on the kingside, each attack being an attack against the king. The 'rules' say that these attacks should be respected, but that each side should be getting on with their own attack, and avoiding weakening pawn moves on the flank where they are being attacked themselves. Steinitz taught that the defender should make as few pawn moves as possible, and this remains basically sound advice more than a hundred years on.

So why should this position be an exception? What was going through Petrosian's mind?

If we were to forget about Black's king, and imagine it safely tucked away on the kingside somewhere, then ...a5 would seem a perfectly natural reaction on the queenside. White's queenside pawns are a long way advanced, and as such fall within the range of fire of Black's pieces. Black's pawns though are very difficult to attack, being close to the baseline and well protected. It is only natural that Black should want to challenge the pawn on b4, to knock away the support from the c5-pawn. Only the position of the king makes ...a5 seem, superficially at least, unnatural. Yet Steinitz also taught us that the king is a strong defensive piece, able to guard all adjoining squares, and can look after himself – particularly, we might add, if he has the support of queen, rook, bishop, and a couple of pawns.

An additional factor that helps Black is that the centre is completely open, with Black having the better grip on the four central squares. It is in the centre and near-centre of the board that pieces are at their most manoeuvrable, with simultaneous influence on both sides of the board. This applies

particularly to the diagonal-moving pieces (the queen and the bishop). The black queen on c7 protects the vital square b7, yet also adds to the pressure against the white kingside, and h2 in particular. A black bishop on c5 would guard various critical approaches to the black king, and also attack White's f2. Both pieces also give support to the possibility of creating a knight outpost on d4. A centralized knight on a fifth-rank outpost works on both flanks as well as in the centre.

The point of Petrosian's 18...a5! is not to defend the king. Rather, it is to break White's pawn-roller so he can take control of the centre, the first stage in the ultimate objective of dominating the whole board. It is an inspired defensive move because it is an inspired attacking move.

19 ♖ad1

One of those positions where it is better to allow an exchange of pawns rather than to initiate the exchange. 19 bxa5 ♗xc5 merely allows the bishop a quick route into the game, and 20 a6 b6 21 a5 b5 is fruitless.

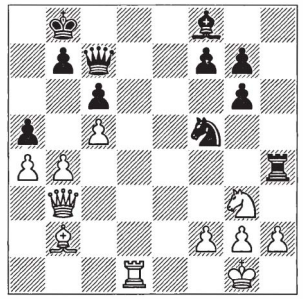
19...♖xd1

Not the move that Black would ideally want to play, but if 19...♗e7 the pawn on f7 is *en prise*. 19...axb4?? is an outright blunder in view of the reply 20 ♗e5.

20 ♖xd1 ♖h4? *(D)*

Black uses the open centre to ensure that his rook is effective on both flanks simultaneously. But is this really more important than the white rook's control of the open central file? In view of the possibility given in the next note, Black should have settled for 20...axb4 ∓.

W



21 bxa5?!

The good impression given to us by Petrosian's ingenious play should not blind us to the fact that White has several positional trumps too, and that there is a lot of play in the position. Clarke suggested 21 ♗c3(?) as an improvement, but such a passive move in such a dynamic position cannot possibly be good.

The correct method is centralization with 21 ♕d3!. If Black ignores the centre, then White must capture the centre! In view of the various threats on d8, and in view of 21...♗e7?! being a probable loss of tempo in later play, 21...♔a7 is critical. Then 22 ♘xf5!, and now:

1) 22...♕xh2+ 23 ♔f1 gxf5 24 ♕d8 ♕h1+ 25 ♔e2 ♖e4+ 26 ♔d2 ♕xg2!. Now it is obvious that White has an easy draw if he wants it, which is enough to show the superiority of 21 ♕d3! over the move chosen, but it is not so clear he can play for more. One false trail is 27 ♕xa5+ ♔b8 28 ♕d8+ ♔a7 29 ♔c2 ♗e7 30 ♕b6+ ♔b8 31 ♖d7?? (31 ♖d8+ =) 31...♖e2+ followed by an eventual capture with check on b2, and Black's queen and bishop combining for a mating attack.

2) 22...gxf5 and then:

2a) 23 ♕d8?! ♕xd8 24 ♖xd8 ♖xb4 25 ♖xf8 ♖xb2 26 h4 is not 100% clear, but ought to favour Black.

2b) 23 g3 ♖xb4 24 ♗c3 ♖e4 (after 24...♖xa4?! 25 ♕xf5 g6 26 ♕c2 White has the advantage) 25 ♗d4 ♕d8 26 ♕c3 and White has good compensation for the pawn; he plans to complete his piece coordination with f3, and then ♖b1. If 26...♕d5?!, 27 ♕xa5+ ♔b8 28 ♗e5+ wins the queen.

21 ♕d3 has a Laskerian feel to it. White's b-pawn is under attack, so how should he defend it? Or is the b-pawn so vital to White's play that it has to be exchanged or defended? White should forget the b-pawn; abandoning this pawn is just the necessary concession that the defender has to make to preserve the defensibility of the position as a whole. It is more important for White to centralize, counter-attack, and take advantage of the temporary lack of coordination of the black pieces and the openness of Black's king. The defender, as White must now be considered, should set up a series of barriers to resist the attacker, and there are few methods of barrier-creation more effective than sacrificing a pawn to create an indomitable and centralized piece-mass.

21...♗xc5

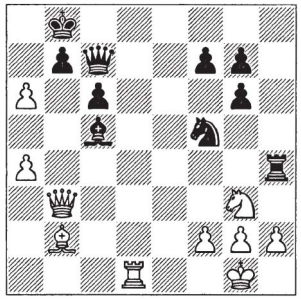
It is evident that the pawn exchange has considerably weakened White's grip on the centre. The slight exposure of Black's king is insufficient compensation.

22 a6 *(D)*

22...b6

I have found it very difficult to know how to assess this move, and in

B



various drafts have given it everything from ?! to !. Generally in open positions one does not want to make too many pawn moves as it is piece activity that decides, but there is also the consideration that Black needs security for his king.

22...♖b4?! leaves Black exposed to threats of ♗a3 after 23 ♕c2!.

22...♘d4!? is the obvious centralizing move, when endgames, after, for example, 23 ♕xb7+, tend to favour Black. 23 ♕e3! is the appropriate reply, when 23...♕f4?! 24 ♕e8+ ♔a7 25 axb7 leaves the black king exposed, while all the black pieces milling around White's king are ineffectual. Maybe 23...♘e6, when the game is still around level, perhaps veering slightly in favour of Black. It is safer to have a black piece blocking the e-file.

23 ♖e1!

The e-file is much more useful here than the d-file; the rook gives support both for a knight on e4 and for a bishop on e5.

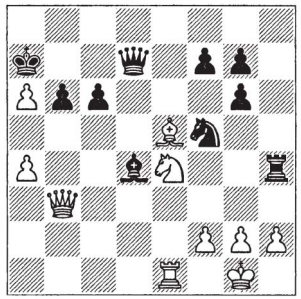
23...♔a7 24 ♗e5 ♕d7 25 ♘e4 ♗d4 *(D)*

Things start to get tactical around here. The text-move is the safest, but does not avoid all complications:

1) 25...♖xe4? 26 ♖xe4 ♕d2 27 ♕xf7+ ♔xa6 28 ♕c4+ followed by ♕f1 refutes Black's sacrifice.

2) 25...♕d5?! 26 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 is sharp, and Black may even be able to get away with 27 ♕xf7+ ♔xa6 28 ♗b8 ♖xa4, since if 29 ♖b1, then 29...♖b4 30 ♖a1+ ♔b5 32 ♕a7 ♕c4!, and the black king's friends hold off his enemies. Black's pieces give a slightly uncoordinated impression if White does not unbalance the position, so perhaps White could try 27 ♕d3, and if 27...♕d5, then 28 ♕xd5 cxd5 29 f4 ±.

W



26 g3?

A lucky break for Petrosian. Dückstein, perhaps nervous at having the chance to try to beat the most difficult-to-beat player in the world, plays a tempting but superficial move and falls victim to that most Petrosianical of motifs, the positional exchange sacrifice.

26 a5! would have been perilous for Black:

1) 26...♗xe5 27 axb6+ ♔a8 (the alternative 27...♔b8 28 ♘c5 leaves the king on a worse square) 28 ♘c5 ♗xh2+ 29 ♔f1 ♕d8 30 a7! (threatening b7+) 30...♗e5 31 b7+ ♔xa7 32 b8♕+ ♕xb8 33 ♕a3+ ♔b6 34 ♖b1+ ♔c7 35 ♘a6+ with decisive material gain.

2) 26...bxa5, not surprisingly, leaves the king too exposed: 27 ♕b8+ ♔xa6 28 ♗xd4 (28 ♖b1 ♗a7!) 28...♕xd4 29 ♖b1 ♕a7 30 ♕c8+ and mate follows.

3) 26...♔xa6 27 ♕d3+! ♔b7 (27...b5 28 ♘c5+; 27...♔a7 28 axb6+ ♔xb6 29 ♖b1+; 27...♔xa5 28 ♕a3+ ♔b5 29 ♖b1+ ♔c4 30 ♕b3#) 28 ♘c5+! bxc5 29 ♕b3+ with mate to follow.

4) 26...b5 27 g3!? ♗xe5 28 gxh4 ♘d4 29 ♕a3! (a vast improvement on the game; Black's king is in considerable danger on the g1-a7 diagonal):

4a) 29...♕g4+ 30 ♘g3 ♘f3+ 31 ♔h1! ♘xe1 32 ♕c5+ ♔b8 33 ♕b6+ ♔c8 34 ♕xc6+ ♔d8 35 a7 and the 'doomed' a-pawn queens.

4b) 29...♕d5 30 ♕e7+ ♔xa6 31 ♘c5+ ♔xa5 32 ♖a1+ ♔b4 is a brave try, but White's attacking pieces work too well together to allow this liberty. Either double check wins, the simplest line being 33 ♘a6++ ♔c3 34 ♕b4+ ♔d3 35 ♕b1+!, and if 35...♔e2, then 36 ♕d1#. White must take care not to allow Black's king to slip away to the kingside.

4c) 29...b4!? 30 ♕e3 probably favours White, Black's queenside being much looser than in the game.

5) 26...f6 27 ♖d1! ♖xe4 (27...fxe5 28 axb6+ ♔b8 29 ♕g8+ ♕c8 30 a7+ +–) 28 axb6+ ♔xa6 29 ♕a3+ ♔xb6 30 ♖b1+ +–.

6) 26...♕d5! turns out to be the safest choice, although given the degree of simplification offered, it is hardly a winning try – unless White over-presses!

6a) 27 axb6+ ♗xb6:

6a1) 28 ♗b8+? ♔xa6 29 ♖a1+ ♔b7 30 ♖a7+ ♔c8 is a false trail.

6a2) 28 ♕xd5 cxd5 ought to be tenable, but White is still under pressure.

6b) 27 ♕xd5 cxd5 28 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 29 axb6+ ♔xb6 30 ♘c3 is a clear draw.

There is a safe way through all the complications for Black, but he would need to abandon all thought of winning. Or, to put it another way, Dückstein missed a draw, even at a late stage of proceedings. Several sources have given this game as an example of outstanding and original positional technique against slightly inferior play. It is much more interesting than that – the game has been a tense and evenly fought battle, with both players having to find unusual ideas. Dückstein's downfall is sudden; his last move was alas a positional blunder.

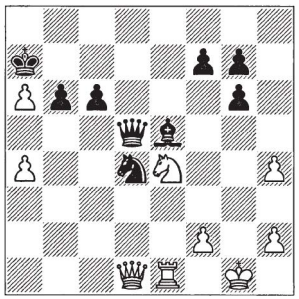
26...♗xe5!

With this exchange sacrifice, the complexion of the position changes. Exchanging a tangible advantage (e.g. material) for an intangible advantage (e.g. central control with pieces) is as important an aspect of positional play as the converse.

27 gxh4 ♘d4 28 ♕d1

With no way to approach the black king, White must play defensively.

28...♕d5 *(D)*



Another dramatic shift in the balance of power in the centre has taken place, and this time it is a permanent shift in that Black can bolster his piece outposts in the centre with pawn moves (...c5, ..f6 or ...f5), and White is not quite in a position to stir up trouble on the flanks.

This whole game is puzzling if one is used to thinking of central control as a permanent asset. All through the game the appearance is given that one of the players tries to control the centre, then relinquishes the centre, which the opponent then temporarily takes over, then abandons. The whole question makes more sense if one sees the chess struggle not as a seamless whole but rather as a series of multiple skirmishes across a geographically differentiated chessboard. The two central files have been clear of pawns for a long time, and neither king is anywhere near the centre, so having an extra piece or two in the centre does not of itself confer any decisive advantage. While both players recognize the need to keep a presence in the centre, the game will be strategically decided on the flanks, where the potentially decisive weaknesses are. Various skirmishes have taken place on the queenside in particular, with Black trying to prove White's pawns fatally weak, and White trying to expose Black's king to attack. There have also been minor scuffles on the kingside, partly based on pressure against White's king, and partly based on the struggle to maintain or evict the rook on h4. The serious hole that has just appeared in White's pawn-structure might suggest that something decisive will take place on the kingside.

So what of the centre? The point is that the centre is a reservoir of strength for pieces located there, as such pieces may move to either flank at very short notice. On several occasions, this reservoir has been drawn upon, as play has sharpened on one or other of the flanks. This gives the impression of the centre being unnecessarily abandoned, when in fact it is being used correctly. A situation has now been reached however, that we may say with only a little simplification of the truth that Black *controls* the centre. It is noticeable that Black does not actually *win* the game in the centre. Instead, his priority is to make the centre as secure as possible, to make it a permanent reservoir of strength, and then to win the game on the flanks. Black is a whole exchange down, but if he can pick up a couple of stray pawns, he will have equalized the material count, and will be ready to press for victory.

29 ♖e3

Presumably so as to play ♘c3 without having to worry about tactics. If immediately 29 ♘c3, White is OK after either 29...♘f3+ 30 ♔h1 ♕xd1 31 ♖xd1 ♗xc3 32 ♖d3, or 29...♕e6 30 f4 ♕h3 31 fxe5 ♕xc3 32 ♖f1. 29...♕f3! is, however, powerful (30 ♖xe5 ♕xd1+ 31 ♘xd1 ♘f3+; 30 ♕d2 ♕h3; or 30 ♘e4 ♕f4 31 ♔f1 ♕xh2 32 ♘g3 f6∓).

29...♘f5 30 ♖e1

30 ♕xd5? cxd5 leaves White a hopeless endgame; defence by counter-sacrifice does not work here.

30...♘d4

Offering a repetition of position, and if White accepts, then what? The obvious alternative after 31 ♖e3 ♘f5 32 ♖e1 would be 32...♗d4, when play might continue 33 ♘g3 ♘xh4 34 ♖e7+ ♔xa6 35 ♕d3+ b5 36 axb5+ ♔b6 37 ♕e4 (37 ♘e4?? ♗xf2+ −+) 37...♕xe4 38 ♖xe4 g5 39 bxc6 ♔xc6 with a likely draw.

Black preserves better winning chances with 32...♕xd1 (or 30...♕xd1). After 33 ♖xd1 ♔xa6 White's prospects of survival on the queenside are not great, though it is possible that resolute centralization (yet again!) with ♖d7, ♔f1, ♔e2, etc., might save the day.

Petrosian was presumably happy to gain a little time on the clock by repeating moves, and maybe even happier when his opponent decided to try something different.

31 ♕d3?!

This carries no threats, and so allows Black time to consolidate his centre in peace.

31...f5 32 ♘g5

32 ♘c3?? ♘f3+. After the text-move, the knight is poorly placed for defence. Stuck on the kingside it has no influence on the queenside. Petrosian is quick to take advantage of this.

32...c5 33 ♖e3 c4 34 ♕d1 ♔xa6

Finally it goes.

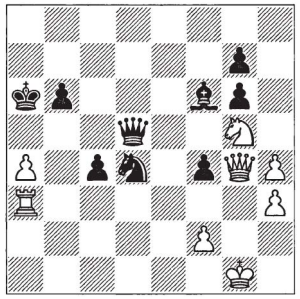
35 ♖a3

Random moves, but 35 ♘e6 f4! (35...♕xe6 36 f4) 36 ♘xd4 fxe3 37 fxe3 ♕e4 (Clarke) wins.

35...♗f6 36 h3 f4 37 ♕g4 *(D)*

A last shot at counterplay, which Petrosian answers in typical fashion by advancing his king into the heart of the empty queenside.

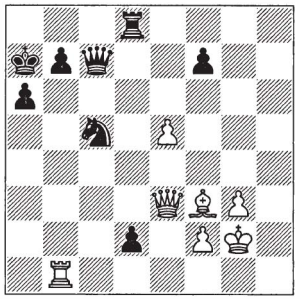
B



37...♔a5! 38 ♘f3 ♔b4 39 ♘xd4 ♔xa3 40 ♘c2+ ♔xa4 0-1

Curiously, Petrosian *twice* made successful king wanderings against Fischer, having castled queenside in the Caro-Kann, at the 1959 Candidates Tournament! The drawn game is well known (with both players having two queens), and appears in Fischer's *My 60 Memorable Games*. Here is the finish of the earlier game. Black has successfully beaten off White's queenside attack, and may now think about converting his passed pawns.

B



Fischer – Petrosian
Bled Ct 1959

41...♖d3 42 ♕f4 ♕d7 43 ♕c4 b6 44 ♖d1 a5 45 ♕f4 ♖d4 46 ♕h6 b5 47 ♕e3 ♔b6 48 ♕h6+ ♘e6 49 ♕e3 ♔a6 50 ♗e2 a4 51 ♕c3 ♔b6 52 ♕e3 ♘c5 53 ♗f3 b4 54 ♕h6+ ♘e6 55 ♕h8 ♕d8 56 ♕h7 ♕d7 57 ♕h8 b3 58 ♕b8+ ♔a5 59 ♕a8+ ♔b5 60 ♕b8+ ♔c4 61 ♕g8 ♔c3 62 ♗h5 ♘d8 63 ♗f3 a3 64 ♕f8 ♔b2 65 ♕h8 ♘e6 66 ♕a8 a2 67 ♕a5 ♕a4 68 ♖xd2+ ♔a3 0-1

Game P4
Botvinnik – Petrosian
Moscow Wch (18) 1963
Queen's Gambit, Exchange

Fittingly, the game which for all practical purposes gave Petrosian the World Championship was a fine defensive effort. Petrosian had to absorb a lot of pressure in the earlier part of the match, but his defensive skills were sufficient to hold Botvinnik at bay, and after 17 games, Petrosian led 9-8. This was an advantage, but only a slender one, which could be overturned by a single game, a single move even. Botvinnik had to play for a win in game 18, since he was running out of games with White, and victory would in effect have taken him ahead (given the Champion's 'advantage of the draw').

Botvinnik had, to appearances at least, much the easier play in game 18, and Petrosian's pieces looked uncomfortably constricted. Most sources have suggested that Botvinnik was indeed clearly better, though the matter is far less straightforward than has generally been assumed. The game is in fact a masterpiece of prophylactic defence (despite Petrosian's lapse on move 24), with Petrosian manoeuvring with great skill and care to ensure that Botvinnik's e4 break is never at any stage allowed to be effective. Petrosian eventually won the game to go two up, then won the next game as well against a tired and disorientated opponent, and then halved out in the remaining games to win the match.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗e7 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗f4

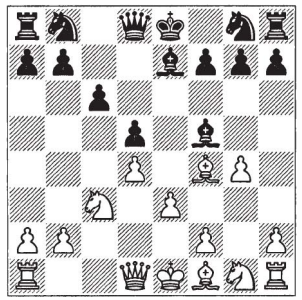
The reason for playing 3...♗e7 instead of 3...♘f6 is partly to avoid the annoying pin on the knight (♗g5) after the exchange of pawns. The form of Exchange Variation reached in the game is less critical for Black, but that does not necessarily mean that equality comes easily.

5...c6 6 e3 ♗f5

6...♘f6 7 ♗d3 ±.

7 g4 *(D)*

B



One of many 'Botvinnik systems'! White gains space, and hopes to capitalize on this extra space. Petrosian as Black may take some comfort from the Steinitzian precept that any pawn advance is a potential weakening. Black cannot take advantage of the pawn weakness directly, since White's kingside is too well packed with pieces. The concession that White has made in terms of pawn-structure does, however, make it more difficult for him to switch his pieces around to generate an attack; the kingside must not be left devoid of piece cover.

7...♗e6

The most flexible retreat. 7...♗g6 leaves the bishop as a target, *ECO* giving 8 h4 ♗xh4? (8...h5 9 g5 ±) 9 ♕b3 b6 10 ♘f3 ♗e7 11 ♘e5 ±. White can do even better than this: 10 ♖xh4! ♕xh4 11 ♘xd5 with a winning attack.

8 h3

So that the g-pawn does not itself come under fire, although there are slight but discernible weaknesses on surrounding squares.

8 h4!? followed by h5 is an uncompromising plan, though 8...♘d7 9 h5 ♕b6 followed by 10...♘gf6 seems perfectly playable for Black.

8 ♗e5 is a recent try. Then 8...♘f6 9 g5 ♘e4 10 h4 0-0 11 ♗d3 ♕a5 12 ♕c2?! (loss of tempo) 12...♘a6! was favourable for Black in Alexandrov-Kharitonov, Sochi 1997, but there are alternatives for both sides.

8...♘f6

The standard move, perhaps precisely because it was used in this critical World Championship game, but it seems more flexible to delay still further the development of this knight,

and to play 8...♘d7 first. This move-order would retain the option of ...h5, without allowing White the annoying g5. 9 ♗d3 then transposes to the twelfth Botvinnik-Petrosian game (8 ♗d3 ♘d7 9 h3), when play continued 9...h5 10 gxh5 ♘df6 11 h6 ♘xh6 12 ♕c2 ♘h5 (12...♕d7!? 13 ♘f3 ♗f5 14 ♘e5 ♗xd3 = Lputian-Geller, USSR Ch 1985) 13 ♗e5. Now Petrosian continued 13...f6 14 ♗h2 ♗d6 15 ♗g6+ ♗f7 16 ♘f3 ♗xg6 17 ♕xg6+ ♘f7, when 18 0-0-0 would have given White a slight edge. The principle of avoiding unnecessary pawn moves in defence suggests instead 13...♗d6, but White still looks better after 14 ♘f3.

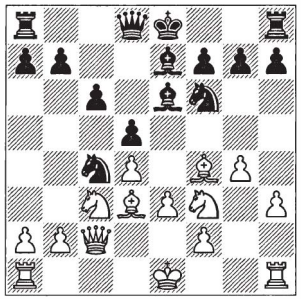
8...♘d7 9 ♘f3 ♘gf6 transposes to the main game, but here again it might benefit Black to avoid ...♘gf6, and play instead 9...♘b6!?.

9 ♘f3 ♘bd7

Suetin (cited by Vasiliev) suggests 9...c5, but *ECO* gives 10 ♗b5+ and 10 ♕b3 as both strongly favouring White. 9...0-0 10 ♕c2 c5, as recommended by Boleslavsky (cited by Clarke) seems to have stood the test of time.

10 ♗d3 ♘b6 11 ♕c2 ♘c4 *(D)*

W



12 ♔f1!?

This is in many ways highly typical of Botvinnik's style of play, with a bold thrust being followed by a few moves of introspective consolidation, hoping to cement the position and make permanent the space advantage without further concessions. Two more dynamic plans have been widely suggested in the literature: 12 ♘g5 ♗d7 13 e4, and 12 ♗xc4 dxc4 13 e4.

The former line is interesting, but perhaps over-combative. For example, 12 ♘g5 ♗d7 13 e4 ♘xg4 14 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 15 hxg4 ♗xg4 16 exd5 cxd5 17 ♗xh7 (17 ♘xd5 ♘xb2!) 17...♕b6 18 ♘xd5 ♖xh7! 19 ♕xh7 (19 ♘xb6?? ♖xh1#; 19 ♖xh7 ♕a5+ 20 ♘c3 ♗f5) 19...♕a5+ 20 ♘c3 ♘xb2, and if 21 ♗d2, then 21...♗g5!. Few would be tempted as White to risk such sharp and potentially counter-productive lines when quieter positional play offers chances of a clear edge; particularly not in game 18 of a World Championship match!

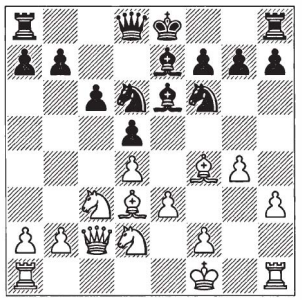
12 ♗xc4 dxc4 13 e4 seems to be perfectly adequately met by 13...b5.

So Botvinnik's move seems correct. In the next few moves Black can do nothing immediately constructive, and can only regroup, keeping a solid formation and staying alert for any attempt by White to open up the position. And if White too is content to manoeuvre behind the lines? This in fact is what happens, and after prolonged piece-shuffling Black gradually inches forward.

12...♘d6 13 ♘d2 *(D)*

13 ♘g5 is no longer particularly sharp. Black could even continue 13...♗c8!?, but it turns out that playing 13...♗d7 is safe enough, in view of 14 ♘xh7 ♘xh7 15 ♗xh7 g6 16 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 17 ♗xg6 ♗xg4!, when Black will have good compensation for the pawn. Not, however, 17...fxg6? 18 ♕xg6+ ♔e7 19 ♕g7+ ♔e6 20 f4! ♗e7 21 f5+ ♔d6 22 ♕e5#.

B



13...♕c8!

Is this, as Clarke suggests, "a waste of time, as the threat of ...h5 will hardly be overlooked"? Or is it instead one of those super-subtle Petrosian prophylactic moves, designed to snuff out an opponent's attacking ideas before he's even thought of them?

If we flick forward a few moves, we see that Black manoeuvres his knight via d7 to b6, and then plays ...♕d7, thus taking two moves rather than one to get the queen to d7. Therefore, an apparent loss of tempo. What this misses out is that in reply to 13...♕c8, White brings his king to g2; this is the tempo that White 'wins'. Now a king move is not in itself part of any attacking plan; leading an attack with the king in a chess middlegame is generally not a good idea. The critical question, in terms of the overall balance of attack and defence, is whether the king is better or worse placed on f1 than on g2. If the position remains closed, then, yes, the king might be a little better placed on g2 than on f1. The point that Petrosian must consider, however, is what happens if the position suddenly opens up. White's most dangerous plan is f3 followed by e4. Black does not have any active counter-possibilities if the white king is on f1, despite the apparently awkward alignment with the bishop on f4. If, however, the king is on g2, and White plays e4, with or without f3, Black has chances of play against the king along the a8-h1 diagonal, and even (after ...g6 and ..f5) along the g-file. Sacrifices on g4 to give a queen check are also an outside possibility. *All told, the king is less secure on g2 than on f1, and that is why Petrosian invests a tempo on luring it there.*

Consider what might have happened if Petrosian had not 'lost' a tempo, and tried manoeuvring the knight, as in the game. There might follow 13...♘d7 14 f3 g6 15 e4 and White is well on his way. If, for example, 15...dxe4 16 fxe4 f5, then 17 gxf5! (or 17 e5, intending 17...♘f7 18 gxf5 ±, but 17...0-0!, suggested by Burgess, keeps the position messy) 17...gxf5 (17...0-0 18 fxe6 ±) 18 e5 ±.

What we are seeing is an extremely subtle demonstration by Petrosian of the difficult art of preventing a slight disadvantage in the opening from developing into a substantial disadvantage.

14 ♔g2

In view of the above comments, it is difficult to agree with the note in Vasiliev's biography of Petrosian which suggests that this move is "continuing

White's plan". White would have preferred the king on f1.

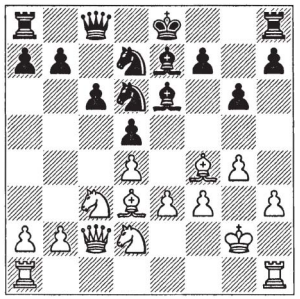
14 f3 h5 15 ♔g2 g5, and if 16 ♗xg5, then 16...♘xg4 is OK for Black.

14...♘d7 15 f3

There is less than nothing for White in 15 ♗xh7 g6 16 ♗xg6 fxg6 17 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 18 ♕xg6+ ♔e7 ∓.

15...g6 *(D)*

W



16 ♖ac1

Botvinnik was widely criticized for his failure to play e4, here or on one of the next few moves. This criticism is misplaced, as Petrosian has got everything superbly covered. After 16 e4 dxe4 17 fxe4, it is true that 17...f5? simply loses a pawn, and that White is threatening to win a piece with d5, but after 17...f6!, White has nothing much that he can do with his pawn-centre, which indeed becomes a potential target for Black's counter-attack. White's g- and h-pawns also hang together rather loosely, and Black is ready to crack open the kingside with ...g5 and ...h5. This position excellently illustrates the principle of pawn islands. For a given number of pawns, the fewer the number of pawn islands the better. Black has two stable pawn islands (a7, b7, c6; f6, g6, h7), while White has three pawn islands (a2, b2; d4, e4; g4, h3), two of which are in danger of being washed away.

There is also a knight recapture, 17 ♘dxe4. Black should be fine after 17...♘xe4 18 ♘xe4 ♘b6. After a later ...♘d5, White will have cause to regret the voluntary weakening of his kingside dark squares.

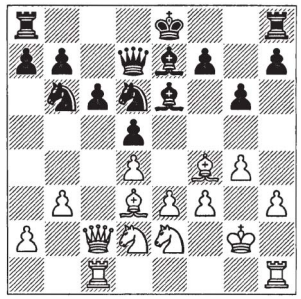
16...♘b6 17 b3

Again there is the e4 question: 17 e4. Now after 17...dxe4 18 fxe4, the spiking move 18...f5 attracts the attention, but after 19 exf5 gxf5 (19...♘d5 20 ♘xd5 ♗xd5+ 21 ♘f3) 20 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 21 ♗xf5 Black must play to equalize. However, there is a looseness in White's position which suggests that Black may try for more. 18...h5 allows White to close the kingside, at least partially, with 19 g5. But Black need not be in a hurry to break open the position just yet; it is enough that he should be able to *restrain* White's unstable pawns, and only later set about attacking them. 18...f6!, and if 19 e5, then 19...♘d5 keeps the tension in a way that should ultimately favour Black, provided he does not overplay his hand. Breaks involving ...h5 are a possibility, while there is also the possibility of constructive piece manoeuvring with ...♘f7 and ...♕d7.

Previous commentators seem to have vastly overestimated the gains to be made with an early e4; the only real effect of such a break would be to loosen White significantly on the kingside and in the centre. Even Vasiliev's biography of Petrosian suggested that Botvinnik was positionally much better, but erred by dallying with the attack! In fact, Botvinnik showed good judgement by not trying to rush things through.

17...♕d7 18 ♘e2 *(D)*

B



18...♘dc8

With his last move, Botvinnik shelved his plans for expansion with e4 for the time being – although it is likely that the pawn thrust was never considered as seriously by Botvinnik as by the pundits. Botvinnik's ♘e2 shows that he recognizes the need to enter a slow manoeuvring game; White has ideas of landing the knight on f4, and maybe he can make use of the half-open c-file.

Petrosian meanwhile has to work out how to improve the positioning of his own pieces. His immediate plan is to swap his knight and bishop round, so that the knight comes to e7, where it provides extra defensive cover for four vital light squares (c6, d5, f5, g6), and thus makes a successful pawn advance by White anywhere on the board more difficult to achieve. Meanwhile, the bishop comes to d6, challenging White's control of the h2-b8 diagonal.

19 a4

There are cases to be made both for and against this pawn move, which by threatening to trap the knight on b6, virtually forces the reply ...a5. Black's a5-pawn then becomes a potential weakness, which makes it more difficult for him to castle queenside, but on the other hand White makes it more difficult for himself to conduct a classic minority attack on the queenside with a timely b4 and b5. Possibly on balance there is a stronger case for leaving the a-pawns as they are.

More important is Botvinnik's failure to attack on the *flank* (not the centre!) where he is stronger – the kingside. 19 h4!? would be more testing for Petrosian's defensive technique, and the same applies on the next move as well. If 19...h5 20 g5, then Black is uncomfortable on the dark squares, whereas if Black allows White to play h5, and responds with ...g5, the f5-square is a problem, and White can play ♗h2 followed by ♘g3.

Black perhaps does best to keep a tight pawn-structure, Steinitz-fashion, with 19...♗d6 20 h5 ♘e7. The initiative is still with White after 21 hxg6 fxg6 22 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 23 ♘f4, although since White has two backward pawns on neighbouring semi-open files (e- and f-), there is an element of risk that would hardly have been likely to attract Botvinnik, given the match situation.

19...a5 20 ♗g3?!

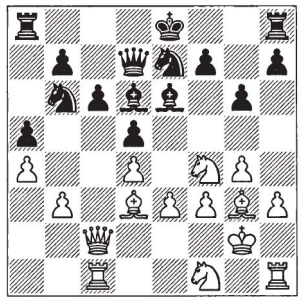
Again, 20 h4 is critical. Botvinnik, presumably anxious about his pawn-structure, tries to manoeuvre with pieces alone, but over the next few moves Petrosian's combined operations with pieces and pawns prove the more effective.

20...♗d6 21 ♘f4 ♘e7 22 ♘f1 *(D)*

Clarke notes that if 22 e4, Black can snatch the pawn safely enough with 22...♗xf4 23 ♗xf4 dxe4 24 ♘xe4 ♕xd4! 25 ♘d6+ ♔d7. In this, Black must be very careful with move-order, since if 22...dxe4??, then 23 ♘xe4, and the threat of a knight fork on f6 wins material.

It may be that Botvinnik was relying on the central pawn-push in this position, which initially looks attractive, but backed out when he saw the tactics were unfavourable. It is difficult to explain otherwise White's choice of plan in the previous two moves. The knight retreat implies an end to any aggressive ambitions.

B



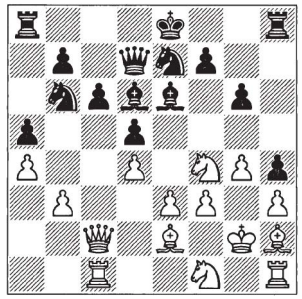
22...h5!

Petrosian has conducted a superbly tight defence so far, preventing Botvinnik from converting his slight spatial advantage into any form of meaningful attack. But there is a limit to what can be achieved by purely prophylactic measures, and Black has reached that limit. Black can do little with piece manoeuvres – the bishop on e6 can't move, and the queen is tied to the defence of the bishop since ...fxe6 would not beautify Black's pawn-structure – and so he must take the initiative with pawn moves. This must be done before White can complete his own piece manoeuvres.

The objective of the pawn-push is only in part to pressurize the pawn on g4. Black wants to drive the knight away from f4 in order to free his own pieces, but an immediate 22...g5? 23 ♘h5 leaves Black with weaknesses on f6 and f5 which may readily be exploited by the white knights, which have a springboard on g3. Black must therefore advance his pawn to h4 first, to cover this square. This provides extra reason for White to have played h4 on move 19 or 20.

23 ♗e2 h4 24 ♗h2 *(D)*

B



24...g5?

The one blemish, unfortunately serious, in an otherwise excellent display of chess prophylaxis. Strikingly it comes about through Petrosian, in the heat of battle, neglecting the old Steinitz teachings about weakening pawn moves. Black should not have left h5 open for a white knight.

Equally strikingly, Petrosian's move was explained in psychological terms

by both Clarke and Vasiliev. Clarke suggested straightforwardly that "his assurance is growing", while Vasiliev notes that "Black has grown tired of passive defence, and from now on perseveringly tries to sharpen the play". Neither writer suggests an alternative move, but the implication is clear; under the excitement of seeing the possibility of forcing the victory in a game which would almost certainly make him World Champion, even the 'iron Tigran' plays impulsively.

The correct move was 24...♕c7!, taking advantage of the white bishop's departure from the b1-h7 diagonal. Black has no need to fear 25 ♘xe6 fxe6 since he will soon be able to free his game, and indeed build an initiative, with a timely ...e5. If White tries to prevent this with 26 f4, Black angles for ...g5.

If White ignores the bishop on e6, Black can if he wishes retreat it next move with ...♗d7, when it starts to become clear that most of the long-term strategic weaknesses are White's.

25 ♘d3?

After this move, Black is able to regain his footing.

25 ♘h5! was better. Botvinnik may have been worried about the trademark 'Petrosian exchange sacrifice' with 25...♖xh5 26 gxh5 (26 ♗xd6 ♖h6 is unclear) 26...♗xh3+ 27 ♔f2, but Black does not seem to have quite enough compensation for the exchange. If, for example, 27...♗xh2 28 ♖xh2 ♗e6 (28...0-0-0 29 ♖xh3 ♕xh3 30 ♕c5), White can make use of his h-pawn with vigorous play: 29 ♕h7! 0-0-0 30 ♕g7 ♖g8 31 ♕f6 ±. 25...♘g8 is a quieter option, but White is clearly in control following 26 ♘g7+ ♔f8 (or 26...♔e7 27 f4 ±) 27 ♘xe6+ ♕xe6 (27...fxe6 28 f4 ±) 28 ♗g1! (28 ♕f5 ♗xh2 is less clear) and he may prepare e4 at his leisure. The ♘f4-h5-g7xe6 manoeuvre (rather than the straightforward ♘xe6) enhances White's prospects by drawing Black's king and knight out of position.

Just as Black's error 24...g5 appears to have resulted from impulsively following a predetermined strategy, one suspects that Botvinnik had decided on d3 anyway (only two moves earlier he had vacated this square with the bishop) and was relieved that Petrosian had spent a move forcing the knight there. Even the very best players in the world are sometimes guilty of routine play.

25...♕c7

This should have been played a move earlier.

26 ♕d2

He sees the unprotected g-pawn, and thinks once again of playing e4. 26 ♗e5 ♗xe5 27 dxe5 d4! 28 exd4 0-0-0 (Vasiliev) gives Black excellent play for the pawn.

26...♘d7

It has taken the black knights ten long moves of manoeuvring to reach d7 and e7! The time has not been wasted, in that these manoeuvres have dissuaded White from opening up the position.

27 ♗g1 ♘g6 28 ♗h2 ♘e7 29 ♗d1

Botvinnik needed the win more than Petrosian did, and so spurns the invitation to continue repeating moves. It might well be that Petrosian would have been happy with a draw after 29 ♗g1, but he could also have legitimately

played for more, as in the game, with ...b6, ..f6, and perhaps ...0-0-0, then several moves of preparation for the ...f5 pawn-break.

We are in the middle of a typical Petrosian cat-and-mouse game. Fischer noted that it was remarkable how often Petrosian's opponents went wrong in such a game, and Botvinnik soon provides us with a high-profile example.

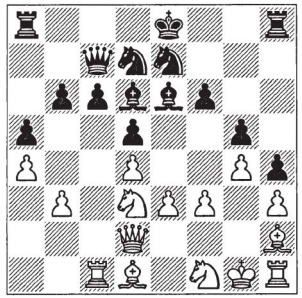
White's king is not too comfortably placed on g2, but Black is not yet in a position to make gains with a pawn-break. This might at first suggest the possibility of 29 ♔f2, with the idea of running the king to the queenside, but the temporary occupation of f2 by the king deprives the knight on d3 of an important defensive retreat, and so 29..f5! (now that ♘f2 is impossible) gives Black a serious initiative. This is one of the first signs that the white pieces are beginning to get in each other's way.

29...b6

29...f5 30 ♘f2 fxg4 31 fxg4 followed by ♗c2 does not break White.

30 ♔g1 f6 *(D)*

W



31 e4!?

Either Botvinnik loses patience, or he takes the wholly rational decision to aim for some form of active play before Black inches forward and prepares for a break at a time when White can no longer hit back. It's a difficult decision!

The most mesmerizing feature of the game is the way that Petrosian achieves so much by quietly moving pieces backwards and forwards.

31...♗xh2+ 32 ♕xh2

The commentators did not like this, but 32 ♖xh2 dxe4 33 fxe4 ♕d6! leaves White's d-pawn horribly weak, with any move by the knight on d3 encouraging the other knight to land on f4.

32...♕xh2+ 33 ♖xh2 ♖d8

If 33...0-0-0 34 b4, the exposure of Black's king outweighs in importance the extra cover that the king may provide for the pawns.

34 ♔f2?!

Neither for the first nor for the last time, Botvinnik appears less self-assured in defence than Petrosian. He soon finds that the king is not well placed on e3, and retreats it again.

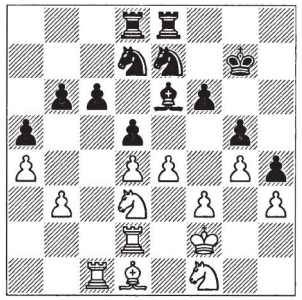
34 ♖d2! (Clarke) is more economical. White then has ♘e3-f5 in reserve, and should not lose.

34...♔f7 35 ♔e3 ♖he8 36 ♖d2 ♔g7 37 ♔f2 *(D)*

37...dxe4?!

Instinctively one gets the feeling that this is premature, and that it is better to keep the pawn tension, since White can do nothing to improve his pawn-structure, and the early exchange of pawns might make it easier for White to defend e4, with, for example, ♗f3. Finding something concrete is not so easy, and one must remember

B



too that the players were approaching the time-control.

Black wants to place one knight on g6, while keeping the other knight protecting the pawn on c6. Petrosian aims for a formation with knights on e7 and g6, presumably so that the knight on e7 may exchange itself for any white knight that reaches f5. Black gets freer piece-play, however, if he places his knights on b8 and g6, the main point being that the e-file is no longer blocked by a knight, thus accentuating the pressure on the white pawn on e4. It does not really matter so much if a white knight lands on f5; the knight may be exchanged later.

The suggested line is 37...♘b8! 38 ♘e1! (38 e5 ♘g6 39 exf6+ ♔xf6 and Black is ready to invade with ...♗c8-a6) 38...♘g6 39 ♘g2 dxe4 40 fxe4 ♗f7 41 ♗c2. White's pressure against the c-pawn is now masked, giving Black time to deploy his knight more aggressively with 41...♘a6. Black may then play for an early ...♘b4, or ...c5, and only if then d5, ...♘b4. If a white knight reaches f5, Black moves the king out of check, and then prepares at his leisure to play ...♗xf5. If White then recaptures on f5 with a pawn, his position is lifeless and Black can infiltrate on the dark squares. A knight recapture would allow Black to challenge knights, with the aim of reaching a good knight versus bad bishop position.

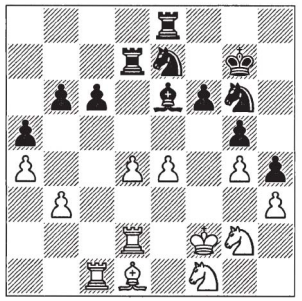
Some of these ideas recur in the game, but White has time to put a better defence together.

38 fxe4 ♘f8

Still 38...♘b8!?.

39 ♘e1! ♘fg6 40 ♘g2 ♖d7 *(D)*

W



The adjourned position. White should be able, with care, to cover his weaknesses, and Petrosian was contemplating offering the draw. His second, Boleslavsky, said to play on; after all, White is in more danger of losing than Black is, and Botvinnik was clearly tired.

41 ♗c2

The sealed move, providing extra protection for the e-pawn in case of later attack. Vasiliev notes that a safer path to the draw would have been 41 ♘h2 ♖ed8 42 ♘f3 ♘e5 43 ♘ge1. These knight manoeuvres are too elaborate to be convincing, and reduce White's chances of active play. If White still has a draw after 43...♘7g6!, it certainly isn't simple!

41...♗f7

So that the bishop does not obstruct the action of the other pieces.

42 ♘fe3?!

According to Clarke, Botvinnik later revealed that this was a slip of the fingers. He had intended to play 42 ♖cd1, but picked up the knight first. Such a slip in attention, so soon into the second session, suggests a degree of nervous exhaustion.

Black is not going to win the game by piece-play alone, unless White leaves one of the pawns insufficiently protected (and White's doubling of the rooks on the d-file makes this less likely). The question then arises of what pawn-breaks are possible. Only in very exceptional circumstances will ...b5 work; it weakens Black's position (for example, on the c-file) more than it endangers White's. Therefore ...c5 is the only credible break, which gains the vital e5-square for the knight, whether White exchanges, advances or allows an exchange of pawns. If, however, White can exchange on c5 and Black is forced to recapture with a pawn, then the pawn which arrives on c5 is unacceptably weak. White must base his defences on this consideration.

Botvinnik's 42 ♘fe3?! is inferior, not so much because it neglects to overprotect the pawn-centre, but rather because the rook on d2 is temporarily left unprotected, which leaves the d-pawn pinned to the d-file. This gives Black a free hit with ...c5, which may not of itself be decisive, but adds pressure to the defence nevertheless.

42 ♖cd1 is more logical, and if then 42...♖ed8, White may either play 43 ♘fe3 c5 44 d5, content in the knowledge that he will remain a tempo ahead of the game, or, more subtly, he may overprotect the rook on d2 with 43 ♔e1!?, which allows the knight on f1 to enter the game without having to worry about the pin on the d-file. It is difficult to see how Petrosian could continue to play for a win.

42...c5

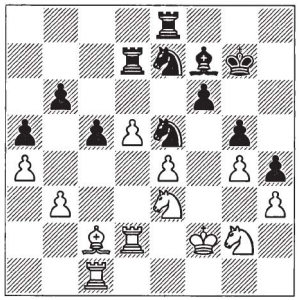
Immediately seizing his opportunity!

43 d5

Clarke suggests 43 ♖cd1, e.g. 43...♖ed8 44 d5. But Black has no need to pass up the opportunity to damage White's pawn-structure. 43...cxd4 44 ♖xd4 ♖c7!, and Black's control of the c-file is more significant than White's control of the d-file. If then 45 ♖d7 ♖ec8 46 ♖xc7 ♖xc7, Black has covered d7 and threatens ...♘f4 with decisive effect; if 47 ♖d2, then 47...♖c3.

43...♘e5 *(D)*

W



44 ♖f1?

It usually takes more than a single small error to lose a fractionally inferior but tenable position. And so it proves here. At move 42, Botvinnik could, with a little more care, have kept a safe defensive formation with normal moves. Instead, he allowed the position to slip a bit. This time round, routine moves are not enough, and the position is critical enough to require *imaginative* play to defend. Botvinnik here is fractionally slow on the uptake; the closed position, the passed d-pawn and Black's hole on f5 do not add up to a guarantee against loss for White.

Contemporary sources were agreed that White had to sacrifice a pawn with 44 ♘c4! ♘xc4 45 bxc4 ♘g6 46 e5. Whichever way Black captures the pawn, White's bishop finally becomes active on f5, his knight has a new lease of life, and he has straightened out his pawn-structure. Although Black is a pawn up, White has a protected passed pawn, and Black has two backward pawns (b6 and f6); in dynamic terms the extra pawn does not count for much.

The sceptical reader may, however, be wondering whether the pawn sacrifice is strictly necessary in this line, since although it holds the balance, White could play for even more with 46 ♖b1, with the aim of building up pressure on the b-pawn with ♘e3, ♖b3, ♗b1, ♖db2, etc. A move earlier, 45...♘c6 may have been more accurate; posting the knight on b4 gives Black some sort of edge, whether or not White sacrifices his pawn with e5 (46 e5 ♖xe5). White has, all the same, improved his pawn-structure, and has good chances to stay in the game; it distracts Black's attention to have to cover both the b-file and the d-pawn.

44...♗g6

Freeing the e7-knight to go to d6.

45 ♔e1

It's getting a little late for 45 ♘c4 ♘xc4 46 bxc4 ♘c6.

45...♘c8 46 ♖df2 ♖f7

White's attempt at counter-attack along the f-file has been a complete failure. Petrosian has been able to combine necessary defence with constructive manoeuvring into attacking positions.

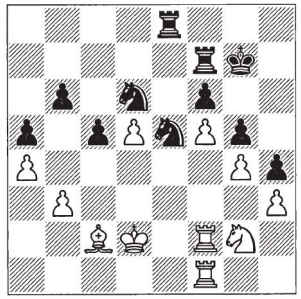
47 ♔d2 ♘d6 48 ♘f5+

A long-awaited damp squib.

48...♗xf5 49 exf5 *(D)*

The position is nowhere near sufficiently blocked for the desperate exchange sac 49 ♖xf5 to have much chance of success. After 49...♘xf5 50 ♖xf5 ♖fe7, Black is ready to play ...♘f7-d6, with maybe a pawn-gaining counter-sacrifice on e4 to come.

B



49...c4!

After this move, not even a (retiring) World Champion would have any hope of defending White's position. Black's two knights are ideally placed, whereas White's minor pieces are targetless. Black may choose which open file he wants to use, the c-file or the e-file; White may only defend passively. And if that were not enough, Black also has a mobile pawn-majority on

the queenside which will soon decide the issue. The rest is simple, give or take a couple of tactical points.

50 ♖b1

50 ♘e3 cxb3 51 ♗xb3 ♘e4+.

50...b5 51 b4

51 bxc4 ♘exc4+ followed by ...b4 gives Black a massively strong protected passed pawn.

If 51 axb5, then 51...♘xb5 52 bxc4 ♘a3!, followed by ...♘axc4+, and White's queenside will collapse.

51...c3+!

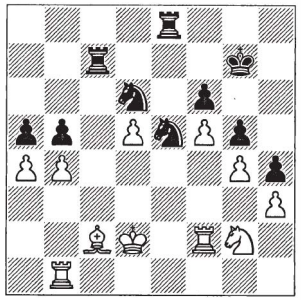
A pawn sacrifice to gain several tempi for the attack – which will allow Black to regain the pawn with interest.

52 ♔xc3 ♖c7+ 53 ♔d2 *(D)*

53 ♔b3 ♖ec8! will soon leave White defenceless.

53...♘ec4+ 54 ♔d1 ♘a3 55 ♖b2

B



55 ♖b3 ♘xc2 56 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 57 ♔xc2 ♖e2+.

55...♘dc4 56 ♖a2 axb4 57 axb5 ♘xb5

Pawn back, decisive attack.

58 ♖a6 ♘c3+ 59 ♔c1 ♘xd5 60 ♗a4 ♖ec8 61 ♘e1 ♘f4 0-1

The better defender won.

Game P5
Spassky – Petrosian
Moscow Wch (5) 1966
Caro-Kann Defence

One of the most forbidding defensive tasks in chess is that of rescuing situations in which you are a pawn behind in an otherwise stable position. At least if you are defending against a kingside attack, you can hope that if you can somehow cover your weaknesses, there will most likely be some prospects of counterplay elsewhere on the board, or the chance to seek salvation by simplifying into an endgame. Whereas if you are a pawn down, you will remain a pawn down and, blunders apart, will remain on the defensive, whatever happens.

In the younger days of chess, when positional skills were not widespread, it was a matter for general admiration if a player, through strategically superior play, could force weaknesses, win a pawn, and then win the game with the extra pawn. The modern player tends to be rather more blasé about this process, or at least its latter stages; why should it be in the least bit surprising that the player with the extra pawn should win the game? What happens in this game is in many ways rather more noteworthy – Petrosian saves a game where he is a pawn down with minimal compensation in a queenless middlegame, without any obvious blunder by his opponent, and in a World Championship match as well! The extreme tension of a World Championship match leads to even the coolest players losing accuracy, particularly when a precious win is in sight, and Spassky was, according to eye-witnesses, visibly extremely nervous at the prospect of his first ever win against Petrosian. It was a good escape by Petrosian, even if later analysis shows that he overlooked an even simpler draw just before the first time-control.

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6

An uneasy cross between the Caro-Kann and the Grünfeld, which is regarded with some suspicion. Petrosian does not advance the case for the fianchetto in this game.

6 ♕b3 ♗g7

The pawn sacrifice, which Black hopes is only temporary, can hardly be avoided. 6...dxc4 7 ♗xc4 e6 8 d5 (Boleslavsky) opens up the position with White well ahead in development.

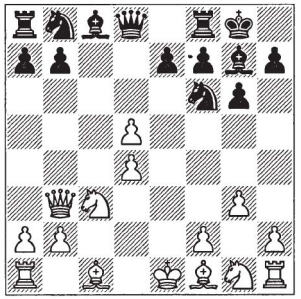
7 cxd5 0-0 8 g3?! *(D)*

Given an exclamation mark in *Informator*, but not even mentioned in the most recent volume of *ECO B* (1997). The currently preferred plan is 8 ♗e2 followed by ♗f3.

8...♘a6?!

A missed opportunity. White's 8 g3 is a slow way of playing the position, and is fine if Black too is content to play quietly. The game which made 8 g3 obsolete was played in the Havana Olympiad later in the year, and showed

B



Black sacrificing pawns to rip open the centre with 8...e6! 9 dxe6 (9 ♗g2 ♘xd5 is comfortably equal) 9...♘c6! 10 exf7+ ♔h8 with an extremely dangerous lead in development for Black, in return for the sacrificed pawns (Gheorghiu-Johanessen, Havana OL 1966, Supplementary Game P5.1).

When a player tries a slow but ambitious plan, the opponent often does best to heed the proverb, 'strike while the iron is hot'.

9 ♗g2

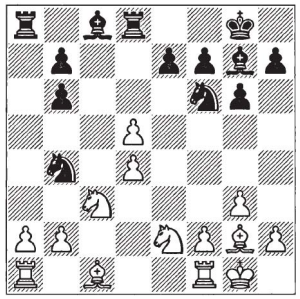
White's development is back on track again.

9...♕b6

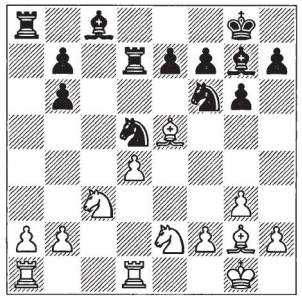
A paradox. Black, a pawn down, volunteers the exchange of queens, even allowing doubled and isolated pawns in the process, while removing any direct pressure from White's d-pawns. The explanation is that Black seeks rapid counterplay with ...♘b4. White's d-pawns themselves become difficult to defend, much more so than Black's b-pawns, and White has also lost control of some important squares as a result of the absence of c- and e-pawns.

10 ♕xb6 axb6 11 ♘ge2 ♘b4 12 0-0 ♖d8 *(D)*

W



B



It turns out that Black regains the pawn after all, since 13 ♘f4 g5 14 ♘fe2 h6 is satisfactory for Black.

If Black were given the chance to play ...♘fxd5, he might even claim to be better. However, White has a way to return the pawn on his own terms.

13 d6! ♖xd6

The pawn recapture, 13...exd6, is not satisfactory either. After 14 ♗g5!, White has pressure, and went on to win in Tal-Botvinnik, USSR Cht (Moscow) 1966 (Supplementary Game P5.2).

14 ♗f4 ♖d7

The rook cannot return to d8 immediately, in view of 15 ♗c7. The enforced blocking of Black's bishop represents an important gain of tempo for White.

15 ♖fd1 ♘bd5 16 ♗e5 *(D)*

16...♗h6!

The alternatives are uninspiring. If, for example, 16...♖d8 (as suggested in *Informator*), one possibility is 17 ♘f4 ♘xf4 18 ♗xf4, and if 18...♗g4, simply 19 ♖d2 ♘h5 20 ♗e3, when Black's pieces are uncoordinated and his queenside pawns under fire. A similar position was seen in Wahls-Adorjan, Altensteig 1989, but with White's bishop on f3 rather than on g2, and the pawn not having moved to g3 (the move-order being 8 ♗e2 and 9 ♗f3, rather than 8 g3 and 9 ♗g2). After 18...♗g4 in this line, White was still a little better after 19 ♗xb7 ♗xd1 (with the pawn on g3, as in the Spassky-Petrosian move-order, 19 ♗xb7?? could be answered with 19...♖a7; Wahls would have had 20 ♗f3 in reply) 20 ♗xa8 ♗g4 21 ♗b7 ♖xd4 22 ♗e3 ♖d7 23 ♗a6.

Petrosian prefers to make it more difficult for a white rook to reach c1, and for a minor piece to establish itself on f4.

17 a3

A semi-waiting move, ensuring that the a-pawn remains protected, and preventing Black from occupying b4.

17...e6?

A basic positional error, of the type it is surprising to see Petrosian making. He simultaneously entombs his light-squared bishop and creates holes on the dark squares. The extra security given to the d5-square is largely illusory.

With Petrosian having taken pains to give extra cover to the f4-square on the previous move, one would have expected him to try 17...♖d8!. If Black is then allowed to play ...♗e6, he has achieved total security in the centre. Yet if White tries to react quickly with 18 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 19 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 20 ♘c3 ♖d8! (20...♖d7 21 d5! ♗g7 22 f4 ±; Black must make room for his light-squared bishop) 21 ♗c7 ♖e8 22 ♗xb6 ♗g4, Black has excellent compensation for the pawn. If, for example, 23 ♖e1 ♗d2 24 ♖f1 ♗f3, then Black is active enough to hold.

White could have exchanged on d5 a move earlier – 17 ♘xd5 instead of 17 a3. The change in placement of the pawn makes no essential difference to the line just considered.

18 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 19 ♖d3 ♗g5!

This does not turn out too well, but Black's position is so awful that it would be expecting miracles to look for a clean escape from here. White's plan is simple: an exchange on d5 combined with ♖b3, besieging the b-pawn. In practical terms, in terms of scoring half-points rather than zeroes, it is generally the best of a bad deal to force the opponent to carry out his or her *positional* threats immediately, and to try to live with the consequences, rather than allowing the chance of a slow but inexorable build-up before the storm breaks. If allowed, Black will now play ...f6, so White is forced to exchange on d5 before ideally he would like to do so.

20 ♗xd5 exd5

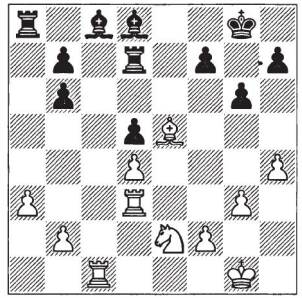
Black has little chance of survival after 20...♖xd5? 21 ♘c3 followed by ♘e4 and, when available, ♖c1.

21 h4 ♗d8 22 ♖c1 *(D)*

22...♖e7!?

A difficult move to assess, in either the theoretical or the practical sense.

B



22...f6!? is more complicated, though like the text-move it leaves Black a pawn down. Despite the extra counterplay created by Black, it will, unlike the text-move, leave a second pawn weak, and that may well be why Petrosian rejected it. Petrosian's move limply lets the pawn drop – and then immediately sets the opponent the difficult challenge of working out how to exploit the material advantage. Strangely, this often seems to set more difficult problems than playing sharply and forcing the opponent to find the best moves – a point we return to later.

22...f6!? 23 ♗f4? ♖f7 solves most of Black's problems immediately. The one real winning attempt is therefore 23 ♖dc3 fxe5 24 dxe5! d4 25 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 26 ♖xc8 d3 27 ♘c3 ♔f7 (provoking f4; if 27...d2?!, then 28 ♘d1 ♔f7 29 ♔f1 ♔e6 30 ♔e2 ♔xe5 31 ♖c2 and White remains a safe pawn up in a much simplified position) 28 f4 ♔e6 29 ♔f2 ♔f5 30 ♔f3 d2 31 ♘d1! (31 g4+? ♔e6 32 ♘d1 ♗xh4), and while Black is still kicking, White should be able to consolidate his position and eventually round up the troublesome d-pawn. The basic plan might be ♖c3, and then to kick the black king

out with ♘e3+ or g4+, followed by ♔e2 and ♖d3.

To have avoided 22...f6 shows either lack of imagination, or terrific self-restraint. In Petrosian's case we may safely say it is the latter!

23 ♘f4 ♗e6 24 ♖dc3

♘xe6 followed by ♖c8 is now a direct threat to win material, in view of the pin on the back rank.

24...♗d7

Informator 1 was extravagant with its exclamation marks when it gave the line 24...♖e8 25 ♘xe6 fxe6 26 ♖c7(!!) ±. The exchange sacrifice is showy and unnecessary rather than strong, since White wins a safe pawn and ultimately the game after the more natural 26 ♖c8; for example, 26...♗e7 27 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 28 ♖c7 or 26...♖xc8 27 ♖xc8 ♔f7 28 ♖b8.

Black is so tied up on the back rank that a pawn has to fall somewhere. Petrosian is careful to avoid leaving additional weaknesses.

25 ♘xd5 ♖e6 26 ♗c7 ♔g7 27 ♗xd8 ♖xd8

Exchanging the bishops is sensible endgame strategy for White, as it prevents Black from creating bishop-pair counterplay.

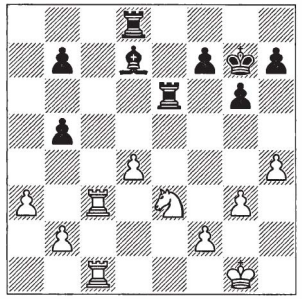
28 ♘e3

Indeed, after this there is nothing that Black's remaining bishop can attack, as all White's pieces and pawns are on dark squares! Tactically this is useful, but we must remember that empty squares are also important; if White is not careful, Black will create a strong outpost for his bishop on White's side of the board. This may at first seem a little far-fetched, but in the next few moves Petrosian is alert to the opportunities that he is given by Spassky's inaccurate handling of the position.

28...b5 *(D)*

Black must not be in a hurry; 28...♗c6?? 29 d5 ♗xd5 30 ♖d1 ♖ed6 31 ♖cd3 walks into a fatal pin.

W



The text-move, though modest in appearance, represents a substantial strengthening of Black's queenside pawn-structure, in that Black prepares a later ...b4 (and if White plays b4 himself, his a-pawn is weakened), and in that White loses control of the c4-square, which would have been useful for the knight. Also, the rear b-pawn is given some room to breathe.

29 d5

One of the paradoxes of chess is that the most difficult of favourable positions to win are often those where, although the opponent's position is not quite resignable, just about every move seems to lead to a winning position. This situation can be extremely disorientating, because the normal criteria for selecting a move are missing. If you are winning whether you push a critical pawn, or keep it where it is in order to control more squares, how do you decide which way to play? The usual homilies about choosing the simplest way, avoiding complications, cutting down the opponent's options, do not work, because in a position where everything seems simple, how do you choose the simplest? And how does one determine in which lines hidden reefs may be encountered? The problem is not one of laziness or over-relaxation, but is rather a fundamental one of chess technique and psychology. It is not easy to solve, either.

On the current position, we can say that Spassky's move, gaining space and taking away squares from Black's pieces, is perfectly reasonable. Other possibilities could also have been considered, probably no more or less valid.

29...♖b6 30 ♘c2?

A big step in the wrong direction. White's eagerness to prevent ...b4 by playing ♘b4 is understandable, especially as the knight would still protect d5. Playing the well-centralized knight to the queenside reduces White's influence on the kingside though, something of which Petrosian is quick to take advantage.

White has a wide array of possible plans, but the most promising is 30 ♖b3 followed by ♖b4. A rook on b4 is actively placed, as it puts pressure on the b-pawn while remaining able to swing across the fourth rank. There are also attacking plans based on pins on the b-file, and if, for example, 30...♖c8, then 31 ♖xc8 ♗xc8 32 ♘c4 winning a second pawn.

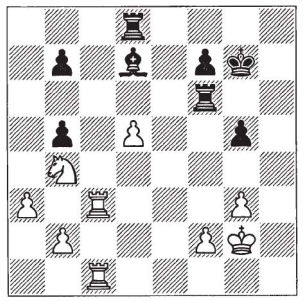
I doubt if even Petrosian could have put up a long resistance after 30 ♖b3.

30...h6!

Petrosian instantly senses the weakening of White's kingside.

31 ♘b4 g5 32 hxg5 hxg5 33 ♔g2 ♖f6! *(D)*

W



Any more hesitation by White, and Black will soon have three pieces in the attack against the king, with the pawn on g5 providing useful assistance. White should not get checkmated, and has excellent chances of keeping his extra pawn, but Black's drawing possibilities have been significantly enhanced.

Opening up play in the sector that the attacker is ignoring is often a useful defensive ploy.

34 ♖e3

Ensuring that Black is unable to take control of the centre. Petrosian's diversionary tactics on the kingside have already been sufficient to dissuade Spassky from an early queenside invasion. After 34 ♖c7 ♗g4 35 ♖1c3 ♖e8!, *Informator* gives the position as unclear, but Black is at least equal. For example, 36 ♖xb7?? (reckless) 36...♖e2 37 ♘d3 ♗f3+ 38 ♔f1 ♖h6 with mate to follow; 36 f3?! ♖e2+ 37 ♔f1 ♖xb2 ∓; or 36 ♖e3 ♖xe3 37 fxe3 ♗f3+ 38 ♔g1 (38 ♔f2 ♗xd5+

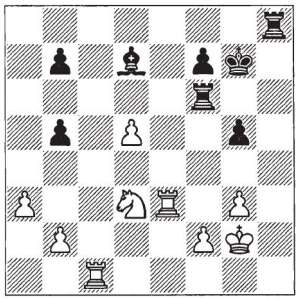
∓) 38...g4 39 ♖xb7 ♖h6 40 ♖xb5 ♖h1+ 41 ♔f2 ♖h2+ 42 ♔e1 ♖e2+ 43 ♔f1 ♖xb2 =.

34...♖h8 35 ♘d3 *(D)*

If 35 ♖c7?, *Informator* continues 35...♗h3+ 36 ♔g1 ♗g4 37 ♘d3 ♖fh6 38 ♖xf7+ ♔g8! ∓.

35 ♖e5 ♖fh6 gives Black counterplay after, for example, 36 ♖xg5+ ♔f6 37 f4 ♖h2+ 38 ♔f3 ♖xb2. Spassky therefore brings the knight back for defence.

B



35...♖d6

It makes a nice story to talk of a fifty-move rearguard action to save a difficult position a pawn down, but in reality the truth is more mundane – or more remarkable still! Especially given the likelihood of time-pressure, it is understandable that Petrosian wanted to destroy public enemy number one, the pawn on d5, but this gives Spassky time to regroup and re-establish his superiority. It so happens that Petrosian's kingside diversion has been so successful that he can legitimately look for ways to create pressure. For sure White's position can still be defended, but whether he has realistic winning chances is an open question.

After 35...♗h3+ 36 ♔g1, *Informator* gives ♗g4 37 f4 ♖fh6 38 ♘f2 ±. Instead 36...♖fh6!? is tempting, when the critical question is what is happening after 37 f3 (37 f4 gxf4 38 ♘xf4! ♗g4 =) 37...♗e6 38 ♖e5. At first I thought 38...♔f6 overloaded White's position, but 39 ♖c7! (Burgess) is strong, one idea being 39...♖h1+ 40 ♔f2 ♗f5 41 ♖xf5+ ♔xf5 42 ♖xf7+ ♔g6 43 ♘e5+. 38...♖h1+ 39 ♔f2 ♖xc1 40 ♘xc1 ♔f6 41 f4 gxf4 42 gxf4 also leaves Black struggling. It is difficult to say whether his chances are better or worse than in the game.

35...♖fh6!? might seem over-direct, given that ...♖h2+ is not an immediate threat. White must nevertheless act quickly, in view of the possibility of Black strengthening his attack with ...♗g4, but this need for haste makes it difficult for White to coordinate his pieces for any offensive operation. White's best try seems to be to escape with his king by 36 ♔f3, when although Black may regain the pawn by 36...♖f6+ 37 ♔e4 (37 ♔g2 ♖fh6 repeats) 37...♗f5+ 38 ♔d4 ♗xd3 39 ♖xd3 ♖xf2 40 b4, the d-pawn has not been liquidated, White's pieces are more active, and Black's doubled pawns are weak.

It is difficult to establish, even with the benefit of hindsight, whether Petrosian's choice in time-trouble was the most accurate. The remarkable feature of the last few moves is how strong a recovery he has managed to generate from such an unpromising position.

36 ♘e5!

It is now time for Spassky to show the virtues of active defence. He returns the extra pawn, but regains the initiative, and this initiative nets him another pawn, and the cycle begins again.

36...♗h3+

36...♖xd5? 37 ♘xd7 ♖xd7 38 ♖c5 should win for White.

37 ♔f3 ♖xd5 38 ♖c7

There is trap and counter-trap after 38 g4 ♖e8 39 ♖ce1 (39 ♖h1 =) 39...f6? (39...f5! instead liquidates to a draw), when 40 ♘d3?? ♖xd3! is an entertaining cross-pin from thin air, but White has 40 ♘c4! ±. Maybe White should improve his coordination by 38 b4!.

38...♗e6 39 ♖xb7

White may vary, but it is unlikely he can improve significantly.

39...♖c5?!

One fully appreciates that no player would want to abandon their whole queenside just before the time-control, and so it is understandable that Petrosian plays cautiously here. 39...♖d2! draws though; on 40 ♖xb5 ♗d5+ 41 ♔g4 (the exchange sacrifice with 41 ♖xd5 should not cause Black too many defensive problems) 41...♗e6+ Black has a safe perpetual check, since 42 ♔xg5?! is met by 42...f6+ ∓.

40 ♖a7 ♗d5+ 41 ♔g4 ♖c2

This time 41...♗e6+? 42 ♔xg5 does not work, as Black's f-pawn is pinned. Black tries to mop up a few pawns instead. The standard rule of *defensive* endgame technique is: *exchange pawns!*

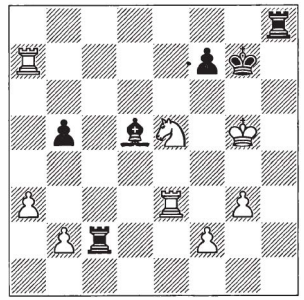
42 ♔xg5 *(D)*

Time-control safely reached. Now which pawn should Black take?

42...♖xf2!

A basic decision, and an important one. Black must capture the more dangerous pawn. In most cases, this would mean taking the outside pawn, the pawn on the flank where a passed pawn may be created *away* from the king. Here though White has the possibility of a direct attack against the king with f4-f5-f6, and this alone is enough to persuade Black to remove the f-pawn.

B



43 ♘d3 ♖f3

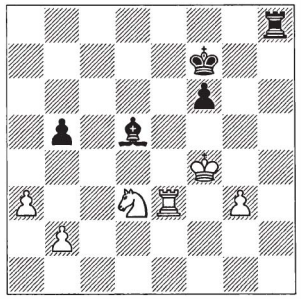
Normally the defender will not want to exchange pieces in an endgame, but here he must bear in mind that if both pairs of rooks stay on, White has enough attacking forces on the board to set up a snap mating attack with ♘f4 and ♘h5+.

44 ♖ae7?

I find this move, presumably made with the aid of adjournment analysis, incomprehensible. Voluntarily withdrawing a rook from the seventh rank releases most of the piece pressure on Black. It is natural to exchange rooks (44 ♖xf3 ♗xf3), when White has a bewilderingly wide range of options. A starting point might be to remove d5 from Black's bishop by playing 45 ♖d7 !?. White's rook is then more flexibly placed than before, and he may build up the pressure significantly with ♘e5, or ♔f4 followed by ♘e5, or even in some lines ♘f4. It is difficult to say,

without extensive analysis, whether White is winning. What can be stated with confidence is that keeping the rook on the seventh would have continued to test Petrosian's defensive skill to the limit.

44...♖xe3 45 ♖xe3 f6+! 46 ♔f4 ♔f7 *(D)*



More progress for Black, taking pressure off his kingside and bringing his king closer to the centre, but there is still a long way to go before he should regard his position as in any way safe. After all, White has the extra pawn and slightly the more active rook. Black's bishop would be considered superior to the knight only if play were to alternate across both flanks, but if White can hold steady on the kingside and focus attention on the queenside, the knight should outperform the bishop.

In terms of pawn-play, Black's plan is that if he can exchange a pair of pawns on the queenside, while keeping his pieces active and his f-pawn safe, he will have excellent drawing chances. If White can hold the pawn-structure steady, and keep pressure on Black's b-pawn, he may still try to win.

White may have slipped on move 44, but it will take a lot more slippage to leave him without winning chances.

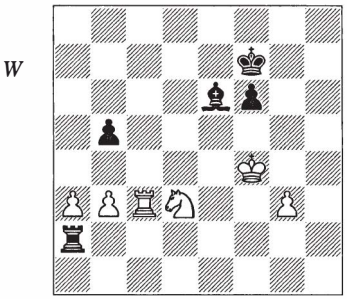
47 ♘b4 ♗c4 48 ♖c3

If 48 ♘c6, then 48...♖h2! keeps Black in the game.

48...♖h2 49 b3 ♗e6

Attacking the pawn on b2 has done its job for Black, as now the pawn has been lured to b3, where it is within the gaze of Black's bishop. ...♖b2 is now a threat.

50 ♘d3 ♖a2! *(D)*



Petrosian has made significant progress, not by hiding in his shell and hoping for the best, but by playing actively.

Sometimes the player who is a pawn down in an endgame finds it easier to play actively, as he has fewer weak pawns to defend! This principle may often be used as a guiding beacon for the defender. In most endgames, it is only at a late stage of proceedings that pawn-play dominates. In the earlier stage of the endgame, piece-play tends to be more important, with both players trying to keep their pieces active, maintain dominant piece formations (control of the centre, rook on

the seventh rank, etc.), and force weaknesses in the enemy pawn-structure. Here Black is holding his own in the battle of the pieces, as the need for White to defend both his queenside pawns constrains White just as much as Black is constrained by the need to protect his isolated b-pawn.

51 ♖c7+ ♔g6 52 ♘c5 ♗f7 53 ♖b7

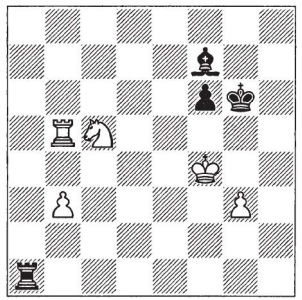
It is at first surprising that White should allow this exchange of pawns, but it turns out that Black draws after 53 ♖a7 b4! 54 a4 ♖c2:

1) 55 ♘d7 (hoping for 55...♗xb3?? 56 ♘f8+ ♔h6 57 ♖h7#) 55...♖c3! 56 ♘f8+ ♔g7 57 ♘e6+ =.

2) 55 ♖a5 ♖c3 56 ♖b5 ♗e8! 57 ♖a5 (57 ♖b8 ♗c6!) 57...♗f7 =.

Tactics in endgames often depend not on sacrifices, but on accuracy in move-order when several pawns are under fire.

53...♖xa3 54 ♖xb5 ♖a1 *(D)*



Another big defensive step for Black. Presumably the Moscow audience was beginning to sense the approaching draw. If Black keeps the f-pawn protected, which is not too difficult, White's winning chances depend *solely* on his passed b-pawn; there is nowhere else to redirect his attack. If White wins piece for pawn on the queenside, he wins the game, only if he keeps his g-pawn. If, however, he brings his king to the queenside (which is likely to be the only way to win the piece), Black will pick up the g-pawn, with a draw.

Black's defensive plan is to centralize his king, to use his rook to harass White from behind (several checks, and getting the rook *behind* White's passed pawn), and using the bishop to assist the rook, and to provide extra cover for b5 and b7.

55 ♘e4

Even in this simplified position, White still needs to regroup his pieces before pushing the passed pawn. If 55 b4, then 55...♗d5!, and Black is ready to attack the g-pawn with ...♖f1+ and ...♖f3.

55...♖f1+ 56 ♔e3 ♖e1+ 57 ♔f3 ♖f1+ 58 ♔e2 ♖b1

Black now draws the king out of position by a succession of rook checks. Once the king is sufficiently decentralized, or otherwise away from its best position, as a result of the avoidance of checks, the rook immediately reverts to its ideal defensive position behind the passed pawn. If this method of defence is working well, it will take a long time for the attacker to regroup properly. The regrouping process cannot start with 59 b4?? in view of 59...♗c4+.

59 ♘d2 ♖g1

Black has no weaknesses (in terms of material that can be attacked) because his last pawn is easily protected. White, a pawn up, has *two* weaknesses, and his pieces are split by the

need to protect both pawns. Black's best means of preventing the systematic advance of White's b-pawn is by *alternating* the attack between two pawns. It is unlikely that Black will win either of the pawns by force, but he can damage the coordination between White's king and knight, occasioned by the need for these pieces to guard both flanks.

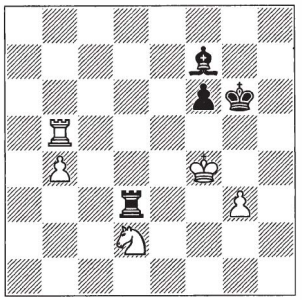
It was Nimzowitsch, in *Chess Praxis*, who first considered in detail in written form the role of alternation in chess manoeuvres, but he was considering mainly attacking play. Defenders are sometimes allowed to use the same ideas!

60 ♔f2 ♖c1 61 b4 ♖c2 62 ♔e3 ♖c3+

Another irritating rook check to drive the king away from the queenside.

63 ♔f4 ♖d3 *(D)*

W



Petrosian's skilful alternating play has split White's king and knight, and although these two pieces soon rejoin forces, they do so with the knight on a light square, where it may be attacked by the bishop. White's coordination is slipping.

64 ♘f3

Not the ideal square for the knight, but if 64 ♘e4?!, then 64...♗d5!, when suddenly it is White who must search for the draw, not so much because of the threat of ...♗xe4, but rather in view of the danger of ...♖d4. After 65 ♘c5 ♖f3+ 66 ♔g4 ♖f1!, Black is suddenly threatening mate, starting with ...f5+. White is still able to survive with 67 ♖b6 ♗f3+ 68 ♔f4 ♗g2+ 69 ♔e3!, sacrificing his g-pawn, but any winning chances would have vanished. A good advertisement for active defence!

64...♗d5 65 ♘h4+

Necessary, but the split between White's forces has intensified.

65...♔f7 66 ♖b8 ♖d4+ 67 ♔e3 ♖e4+ 68 ♔f2

Otherwise the g-pawn comes under siege. White's king is now stuck in the bottom right-hand corner, and cannot give help on the queenside, nor back up an assault on Black's f-pawn.

68...♔e7

White's pieces are so far away on the kingside that Black may even think about *winning* the b-pawn. Of course the f6-pawn will fall in return, but this does not trouble Black, as he will have established a theoretical draw. The rest is straightforward.

69 ♘g6+ ♔d7 70 ♘f4 ♗c6 71 ♘d3 71 b5 ♔c7 =.

71...♔c7 72 ♖f8 ♗b5 73 ♘f4 ♔d7

73...♖xb4?? 74 ♘d5+. It all too often happens that a tired defender, within reach of safety, has a massive lapse of concentration after several hours of dour resistance. But not Petrosian.

74 ♖f7+ ♔e8 75 ♖b7 ♖xb4

This is perfectly safe, despite the pin, and it would be a major lapse in concentration *not* to take the pawn.

76 ♘d5 ♖b2+ 77 ♔e3 ♖b3+ 78 ♔f4 ♗c4 79 ♘xf6+ ♔f8 ½-½

White is still a pawn up, even at the end, but in almost all piece and pawn endgames with level pieces, the player with just a final pawn cannot win if the defending king covers the queening square. Elementary maybe, but it was the first building block for Petrosian's whole plan of defence.

Supplementary Games

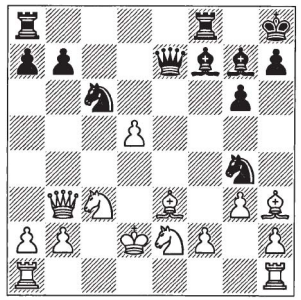
Game P5.1
Gheorghiu – Johanessen
Havana OL 1966
Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♕b3 ♗g7 7 cxd5 0-0 8 g3 e6! 9 dxe6 ♘c6 10 exf7+ ♔h8 11 ♘ge2 ♕e7 12 ♗e3

There is no time for 12 ♗g2? ♘xd4.

12...♘g4 13 ♔d2 ♗e6 14 d5 ♗xf7 15 ♗h3 *(D)*

B

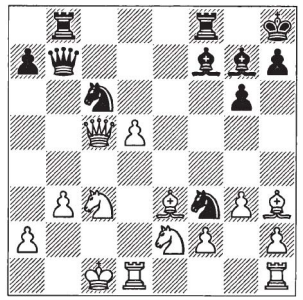


15...♘ge5?

Black has a promising position, but he has sacrificed two pawns, and has no immediate breakthrough, and so he must ensure that he makes progress before White can consolidate. The text-move takes pressure off White's weakest point, e3. Black should play 15...♘xe3 16 fxe3 ♖ae8 with the aim of regaining one of the pawns, and indeed knocking out a key defender, without losing the momentum of attack. 17 e4?! ♕g5+ is going to be difficult for White to meet, while 17 ♗e6 ♘d8! maintains Black's initiative. Black is no worse, and is probably much better; there is ample compensation for the pawn after, for example, 18 ♕a3 ♕xa3 19 bxa3 ♘xe6 20 dxe6 ♖xe6. *In attack, one must try to destroy the defender's weakest link.*

16 ♖ad1 b5?! 17 ♕xb5 ♖ab8 18 ♕c5 ♘f3+ 19 ♔c1 ♕b7 20 b3 *(D)*

B



White has been allowed to recover from his scare in the opening, and is safe with three extra pawns. The rest is easy; probably Black dragged it out only because of a time-scramble.

20...♘b4 21 ♕xa7 ♘xa2+ 22 ♕xa2 ♖a8 23 ♕c2 ♕b4 24 ♘a2 ♕a3+ 25 ♔b1 ♕e7 26 ♘ec1 ♖fb8 27 ♖d3 g5

28 ♗f5 ♕f6 29 ♖c3 ♗xd5 30 ♖d1 ♗g8 31 ♗e4 ♖xa2 32 ♔xa2 ♕a6+ 33 ♔b1 ♕a5 34 ♖dd3 ♘e1 35 ♕a2 ♕e5 36 ♖d4 ♕e6 37 ♕d2 ♕b6 38 ♖d7 ♕f6 39 ♖xg7 ♕e6 40 ♖xg8+ 1-0

An agonizing game for the Norwegian master: a big novelty, and nothing to show for it.

Game P5.2

Tal – Botvinnik

USSR Cht (Moscow) 1966

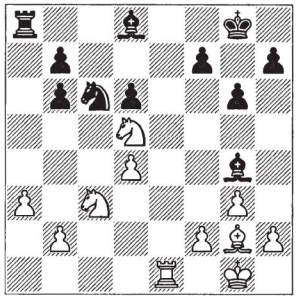
Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♕b3 ♗g7 7 cxd5 0-0 8 ♘ge2!? ♘a6 9 g3 ♕b6 10 ♕xb6 axb6 11 ♗g2 ♘b4 12 0-0 ♖d8 13 d6! exd6?! 14 ♗g5! ♖e8

14...d5? loses a pawn to 15 a3, but after the text-move, Black never gets a chance to contest the centre.

15 a3 ♘c6 16 ♖fe1 ♗g4 17 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 18 ♘d5 ♗d8 19 ♘ec3 ♖xe1+ 20 ♖xe1 *(D)*

B



20...♖a5

Botvinnik, even when past his peak, rarely suffered such a positional bind. 20...♘xd4 21 ♖e8+ ♔g7 22 ♘xb6 would not have helped the defence.

21 ♘e3

White can win material with 21 ♖e8+ ♔g7 22 ♘e3 ♗d7 23 ♗xc6 ♗xe8 24 ♗xe8, as was pointed out in *Informator*, but the text-move picks off a pawn while maintaining complete positional control, and so is perfectly valid.

21...♗d7 22 ♘c4 ♖a8 23 d5 ♘d4 24 ♘xd6 ♖b8 25 ♘ce4 f6 26 ♘c4 ♔f8 27 h3 ♘b3 28 ♗f1 b5 29 ♘cd6 f5 30 ♖e3 fxe4 31 ♖xb3 ♔e7 32 ♘xe4 ♖c8 33 g4 ♖c1 34 ♔g2 ♖e1 35 f3 ♖d1 36 d6+ ♔f7 37 ♗xb5 ♗e6 38 ♖c3 ♖d4 39 ♖d3 ♖xd3 40 ♗xd3 ♗d5 41 ♘c5 b6 42 ♗e4 ♗e6

Black is too far behind in pawns to defend the opposite-coloured bishop endgame which arises 42...bxc5 43 ♗xd5+.

43 ♘d3 ♗b3 44 f4 ♔e6 45 f5+ 1-0

Tal won games by normal positional means quite as often as by mind-boggling attacks!

Game P6

Spassky – Petrosian

Moscow Wch (7) 1966

Torre Attack

The seventh game had an electrifying effect on the Moscow audience, and in later years there were many who regarded this as Petrosian's greatest game. Players castled on opposite wings, a situation which usually implies both players ferociously attacking each other's king, and defeat rapidly following for the first player to flinch with a defensive move. Yet Petrosian seemed determined to rewrite all the textbooks. He started off by playing the first few moves of his kingside attack normally enough, then went into a defensive huddle on the queenside, playing a string of quiet moves, and even surrendering control of the central squares. As the spectators, both grandmaster and amateur, speculated over the reasons for Petrosian's passive play (did he want a draw? Was he psychologically incapable of attack?), more moves were played, the queenside became blocked, Petrosian sacrificed the exchange on the kingside, and suddenly the game was dominated by the relentless advance of one of the broadest pawn-masses ever seen.

By the time the game was over, it had become clear that Petrosian's defence was not passive defence, but rather a sophisticated prophylactic defence. By slotting in a couple of useful defensive moves *before* Spassky was attacking in earnest, he was able to construct a pawn barricade which could prevent the opening of lines in front of his king however Spassky played his pawn advance. This gave him all the time he wanted to set his own attack in motion. Subsequent analysis showed that Petrosian's was not the only way to play the position, and one suspects that Fischer or Tal would have played more directly; Petrosian's handling of the position merits close study all the same.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 ♗g5

Spassky plays in Petrosian's own back yard, as Bronstein put it at the time. Petrosian has intermittently been fond of this system, which is less aggressive than 3 c4, but avoids even the hint of a central weakness.

3...d5

An invitation to the Orthodox Queen's Gambit, but Spassky continues to follow his plan. 3...c5 is regarded as the most reliable equalizing attempt.

4 ♘bd2 ♗e7 5 e3 ♘bd7 6 ♗d3 c5 7 c3 b6

Black develops his queenside in order to be able to castle either side. Petrosian himself has demonstrated how dangerous premature castling could be in this type of position: 7...0-0?! 8 ♘e5 ♘xe5?! 9 dxe5 ♘d7 10 ♗f4 f5 11 h4 c4 12 ♗c2 b5 13 ♘f3 ♘c5 14 g4 b4 15 gxf5 exf5 16 ♘g5 with a ferocious attack for White, Petrosian-Liublinsky, USSR Ch 1947. Black's king would have been safer on the queenside...

8 0-0 ♗b7

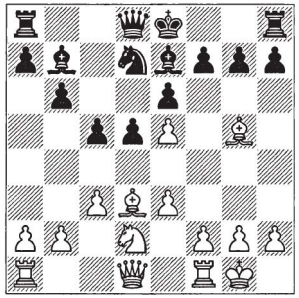
8...0-0 is more feasible, now that White has castled and can no longer recklessly throw forward pawns on the kingside. 9 ♘e5 ♗b7 10 ♕f3 is still in White's favour though. Petrosian typically keeps maximum flexibility for his king placement.

9 ♘e5 ♘xe5 10 dxe5 ♘d7 *(D)*

11 ♗f4

Regarded with suspicion by theory, largely as a result of this game, although this is harsh. Strategically, the key question concerns the pawn on c5, and White's basic option is either to overprotect the pawn (or at least to

W



keep it securely bolstered by the f-pawn), or to sacrifice the pawn, with the idea of drumming up an attack before Black can safely castle. In the game, Spassky falls between two stools, keeping the pawn merely 'adequately' protected; this gives Petrosian the chance of counterplay by striking at the pieces that protect the pawn.

The line with the pawn sacrifice will be considered in the next note. As for securing the outpost on e5, Spassky later chose the more natural 11 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 12 f4 in Spassky-A.Sokolov, Bugojno 1986. After 12...f6 13 exf6 gxf6 (13...♘xf6? 14 ♗b5+ ±) 14 e4 0-0-0 15 ♕e2 d4 16 a4 e5 17 f5, White was significantly better; the game was later drawn. It is curious to note how White switched from a dark-square strategy to a light-square strategy, the transition coming when Black forced White to exchange his e5-pawn, though at the cost of leaving Black's own structure unstable.

11...♕c7 12 ♘f3

The uneasy compromise that we noted, though perhaps White has not actually gone wrong yet.

Black has good chances of defending after 12 e4 ♘xe5 13 ♗b5+ ♔f8!. 12 ♕h5!? is worth considering, with the basic idea that 12...g6 (12...g5 13 ♗xg5 ♕xe5 14 ♘f3 ±) 13 ♕e2 (13 ♕h6? sets the amusing trap 13...♗f8 14 ♕h3 ♘xe5? 15 ♗xg6! ±, but simply 13...0-0-0 leaves the queen hopelessly misplaced) 13...♘xe5 14 ♗b5+ ♔f8 15 e4 gives White good attacking chances for the pawn, Black's ...g6 being revealed as a clear weakening of the kingside pawn-structure.

12...h6 13 ♗g3

Vasiliev gives the sequence as 13 b4 g5 14 ♗g3, but both *Informator* and *ECO* give the move-order as in the main text here. It makes sense for White to make the waiting move with the bishop, to see whether Black genuinely intends ...g5, before committing his own forces on the queenside. If White plays 13 b4 immediately, Black does not have to play 13...g5, but might instead be able to try his luck with 13...cxb4 14 cxb4 ♗xb4 15 ♘d4 a6. Accepting the pawn sacrifice would be catastrophic if Black had already inserted the weakening but aggressive ...g5.

13...g5 14 b4?!

Because we are in the byways rather than the highways of opening theory, this position remains largely unexplored. The main tension in the position arises over the question of whether ...♘xe5 is a genuine threat, or whether White can turn this into a promising pawn sacrifice.

Without going into massive analytical detail, it may be suggested that 14 ♖c1!? deserves a look, the basic idea being the piece sacrifice ♘d4 in reply to ...g4. If, for example, 14...g4 15 ♘d4 cxd4?!, then 16 cxd4 followed by ♕xg4 and White is getting excellent value for his piece, his space advantage and his prevention of Black's castling on either side making it very difficult for Black to coordinate his pieces. Similarly, 14...h5 15 h3 g4 16 hxg4 hxg4 17 ♘d4 cxd4 18 cxd4, etc., when the opening of the h-file does not particularly help Black. If in this line 17...♘xe5, then 18 ♗b5+ ♔f8 19 f3 (19 f4?! cxd4!) 19...gxf3 20 ♘xf3 with excellent attacking chances, 20...♗d6 being met by 21 ♘g5, and 20...♗f6 by 21 ♖c2 and doubling on the f-file.

The author of a games collection, on whatever theme, should sometimes reserve the privilege of not analysing in great detail a complicated position from the opening, concentrating instead on the middlegame. This perhaps is a time to claim that privilege. Black could of course play quietly in reply to 14 ♖c1, with, for example, 14...h5 15 h3 c4 16 ♗b1 ♘c5 (and presumably White's 14 b4 was directed in part at the prevention of such a plan), but 17 ♘d4 followed by f4 seems to favour White.

Despite the exclamation mark for 14 b4 in *Informator*, 14 ♖c1 is probably stronger.

14...h5

14...cxb4?! 15 cxb4 ♗xb4 16 ♘d4 ±.

15 h4

Not ideally the move that White wants to play, since pawn-pushes should generally be kept to a minimum in the sector where one is under attack. However, after 15 h3 g4 16 hxg4 hxg4, White is uncomfortable following 17 ♘h2 ♘xe5 18 ♗b5+ ♔f8 19 ♘xg4 ♗d6 20 f4 ♘c4! (Vasiliev). Tal suggested 17 ♘d4 (Vasiliev does not mention whether this suggestion was made in print or in the analysis room), but White is effectively a tempo down on lines where he has played 14 ♖c1. After 17...cxd4 18 cxd4, Black's main defensive task is to regroup his pieces in such a way that the queen is an active participant in play rather than merely a target. 18...♕c3 is tempting, but it turns out that White maintains a strong attack after 19 ♖c1 ♕xb4 20 ♖c7 ♗c8 (20...♖b8 21 a3! ♕xa3 22 ♗b5) 21 ♕c2 ♔d8 22 ♕c6. The alternative 18...♗xb4!? looks more promising, making a counter-sacrifice on c5 more plausible, and giving the queen a route to the kingside via d8. If 19 ♕xg4, then maybe 19...0-0-0.

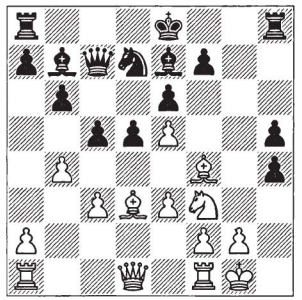
The sacrifice is interesting, but White's pieces are not in the right positions to make it anything other than speculative.

15...gxh4

15...g4 16 ♘d2 ♘xe5 17 bxc5 bxc5 18 ♗b5+ ♔f8 19 e4 (or 19 ♕a4) with good compensation for the pawn (as given by Vasiliev).

16 ♗f4 *(D)*

B



16...0-0-0?!

According to Vasiliev, spectators and commentators, from grandmaster down, had great difficulty predicting, and sometimes even explaining, Petrosian's moves in this game. Petrosian played superbly and with great imagination, but this is the one move that looks open to question. While it is certainly possible to appreciate Petrosian's decision to hang on grimly to his extra pawn, I am sure that several of the grandmasters in the audience would have wanted to open up lines against the white king with 16...h3!. After 17 gxh3 0-0-0, the increased exposure of White's king, and the vulnerability of the knight on f3 (18 bxc5 bxc5 19 ♕a4 d4!) present White with significant problems. If White tries, by analogy with the game, 18 a4, then 18...f6! 19 exf6 ♗d6 gives Black a good game.

Sometimes directness has its merits.

17 a4?! *(D)*

If 17 ♘d4?!, White has good prospects if Black accepts the sacrifice (17...cxd4? 18 cxd4 ♗xb4 19 ♖c1 ♗c5 20 ♗g5!). 17...a6!, closing off the intended destination square, makes the knight move seem rather pointless however (18 ♕e2 ♔b8!?). *When the attacker makes a 'quiet' sacrifice (leaving an attacked piece where it can be taken, or making a sacrifice involving neither a check nor a capture), one important defensive possibility is to make a quiet move in reply, leaving the threat hanging over the piece. If the piece later meekly moves away to a square no better than that from which it started, the defender has gained time.*

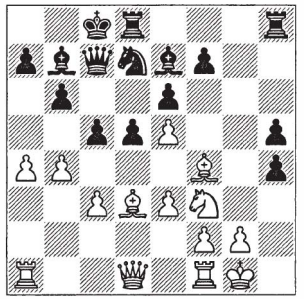
17 bxc5 bxc5 has been suggested in various sources, with a view to the follow-up 18 ♖b1 ∓. Possibly the rook move is premature, with 18 ♕a4, carrying a direct threat (♕xa7) being the more forceful move. If Black plays ...c4 at some stage, White will have the d4-square *and* play along the a- and b-files; this is enough to give prospects of a serious attack against Black's king. If, however, the c-pawn remains still, White's light-squared bishop may join in the attack, with ♖fb1 and ♗a6 being a dangerous possibility. White will probably want the king's rook rather than the queen's rook on the b-file, in part to give his king an escape-route via f1, and in part so that the other rook may support the advance of the a-pawn, should Black defend with ...♘b6 at some stage.

Spassky may have been a little lazy with his 17th move. The exchange of b-pawns helps Black *if his king is still in the centre*, since it frees two important dark squares (c5, b6) for Black's pieces, without endangering the king. The natural plan for Black would be ...c4 followed by ...♘c5. The open b-file would be of little use to White, and indeed Black would be expected to control this file in the long run. Once Black has castled queenside, the safety of the king becomes a genuine issue; White can and must open the b-file, irrespective of concessions this might make in the centre.

17...c4!!

Such a move deserves close attention, not least because Petrosian played it, while (according to Vasiliev) Simagin, Kotov, Kholmov and Flohr all immediately condemned it! And Petrosian

B



won the game. There is 'normal' positional logic, based on standard rules of thumb, and there is higher positional logic, based on a level-headed assessment of the full implications of various types of transformation of the position. It was, after all, Petrosian's immediate predecessor as World Champion, Mikhail Botvinnik, who noted that the basic art of the grandmaster lay in the creation of positions where the normal values ceased to apply.

Again, it makes an enormous difference to our reading of the position whether the king is in the centre or on the queenside. With the black king in the centre, and with White's pawn on b4, ...c4 loses much of its immediate point since it surrenders control of the dark squares; White has a good outpost for his knight on d4 (provided his e5-pawn does not become too weak), and Black does not have the chance of contesting the centre squares with ...♘c5 and ...♘e4. With Black having castled queenside, the main theatre of battle switches from the centre to the flanks. There is still enormous tension in the centre, and neither player can afford to ignore this tension. It is precisely because of this tension that neither player is capable of unilaterally winning the battle of the centre, in the absence of either a positional error (such as acute decentralization) or a tactical error by the opponent. It follows that the players must switch their attention to the flanks, where each player has one attacking flank and one defensive flank. Open lines are critical in attacking the opponent's castled king, and Black has already cleared his half of the g-file, and even won a pawn in doing so.

The main significance of Petrosian's 17...c4 is that it ensures that the queenside remains closed, meaning that he will be able to plug away at White's kingside without having to worry too much about the safety of his own king's fortress. The main argument against is that it seems to involve 'surrender of the centre'. Petrosian correctly assesses that the decisive battle will not be in the centre, but that if the queenside is opened up quickly, it is possible for the battle to be decided there, and very quickly. A minor concession in the centre is quite in order to prevent much bigger concessions being made on the queenside.

The hole Black is creating on d4 is not such a serious concession as it might first appear. For example, in the game Spassky never sees fit to play ♘d4. Moving the knight from f3 weakens the protection of White's main central pawn outpost on e5, and makes it more difficult for the knight to play its part in the defence of the kingside. The only useful attacking square that a knight on d4 can reach (assuming that Black leaves c6 adequately protected) is b5, and an incursion on this square

is easily prevented by ...a6. White will find it difficult therefore to control the centre in any meaningful sense.

The alert reader may well be wondering whether Black, as an alternative to 16...0-0-0 or 16...h3, could play 16...c4 followed quickly by castling. Then 17 ♗f5!? would be rather more effective than in the game, with the idea of blocking the position on the kingside with ♗h3 (if 17...exf5, 18 e6 is unclear).

18 ♗e2

18 ♗f5 has been widely suggested, with the idea that if Black takes the bishop (18...exf5 19 e6 ♗d6 20 exd7+ followed by ♕d4) White establishes a good blockading position in the centre, while if Black declines, the bishop retreats to a good defensive square on h3.

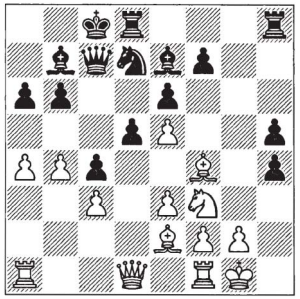
18...d4! is a good blockade-buster though, and after 19 cxd4 exf5 20 e6 ♗d6 21 exd7+ ♖xd7 22 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 Black dominates the position. 19 ♘xd4!? is a more testing defence, and if 19...exf5, then 20 ♘b5 ♕b8 21 ♕d4 ♘xe5! 22 ♗xe5! (Black stands to win after 22 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 23 ♗xe5 ♖hg8) 22...♖xd4 23 cxd4! ♖g8 (23...♗xg2 24 ♗xb8 ♗xf1 25 ♗d6 +–) 24 g3 ♕a8 25 ♘c7 ♕b8 26 ♘b5 with an unusual 'perpetual check' on the queen. Black can, however, keep a serious advantage by ignoring the bishop on f5 a second time: 19...♘xe5!.

18...a6 *(D)*

Stage two in closing the queenside. White can no longer open a file by force, and cannot use b5 for a knight.

Strangely, there was an impression among the audience that Petrosian was playing ultra-cautiously around here, aiming for nothing more than a draw. What he has done though is to show that White's queenside advantage is only temporary; he has already eradicated White's play on that flank. He must now try to demonstrate that his own advantage on the kingside is permanent.

W



19 ♔h1

The pressure on the front e-pawn means that White is unable to play the defensive manoeuvre of a knight move followed by ♗f3. Therefore White requires a rook on g1 for guard duty.

19...♖dg8 20 ♖g1 ♖g4 21 ♕d2

Vasiliev suggests 21 ♘h2 ♖g7 22 ♕d2, but Black can play 22....♘xe5.

21...♖hg8 22 a5 b5 23 ♖ad1 ♗f8!?

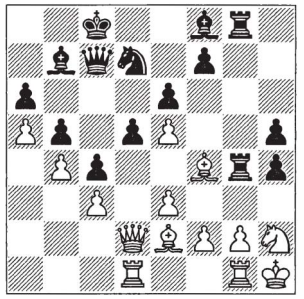
White will now find it impossible to keep both e5 and g2 covered. He can force Black into an exchange sacrifice, but this does not worry Petrosian, who gains two pawns and straightens out his pawn-mass in return for the exchange.

24 ♘h2 *(D)*

24...♘xe5 25 ♘xg4 hxg4

There are many who would be deeply hesitant about making such an exchange sacrifice. The danger is not

B



that Black is in any way worse; he has two pawns for the exchange, solidly placed pieces, and potentially highly mobile pawns, while White has no open lines for his rooks. The danger, as many would see it, is precisely the lack of open lines; will the pawn-mass destroy everything in its path, or will White be able to find some form of blockade? Petrosian had decided that he had made all the gains he could with the rooks along the g-file, and that it was time for a bit of pawn-play if he was to make progress. Besides, after an exchange sacrifice the open lines that become important tend to be the diagonals rather than the rook lines, and the likelihood is that the advancing pawn-mass will create space for both black bishops, particularly the light-squared bishop. White must beware the long diagonal!

26 e4

Trying to recover some space. If now 26...dxe4??, then 27 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 28 ♕d8#.

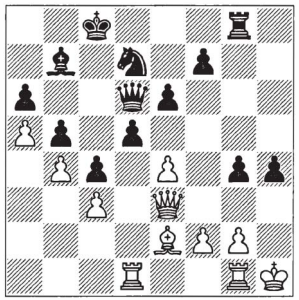
26...♗d6 27 ♕e3 ♘d7?!

Petrosian the cautious had a natural stylistic preference for snuffing out any potential activity by the opponent with carefully planned manoeuvres. There must have been considerable temptation to play for a direct attack with 27...g3, but this leaves various complicated and unclear possibilities in which White might have chances to save himself by an unpredictable tactical resource. Indeed, implausible though it might seem, it is not certain that Black has anything clear after 28 fxg3!? hxg3 29 ♖gf1, with ♗xg3 being an emergency escape in some lines.

Petrosian feels no need to dabble in messy tactics when there is a straightforward strategic path; once the dark-squared bishops are exchanged, White is under pressure on the b8-h2 diagonal. However, there might well be a strong case for 27...f6!?, giving extra security for the centre, and preparing to bring the queen to h7. Besides, the bishop on f4 is not really so much of a threat, and if it exchanges itself for one of Black's minor pieces, Black would presumably want to keep his bishop-pair in harness.

28 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 *(D)*

W



29 ♖d4?

Hoping to provoke Black into weakening the d-pawn, but Black is

quite prepared to sacrifice this pawn in order to enhance the mobility of the others. "In the case of a mobile pawn-mass, we must ... look for collective and not individual mobility, each pawn for itself", as Petrosian may have recalled at this point from his teenage readings of Nimzowitsch's *My System.*

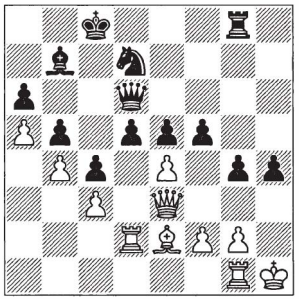
White's most resilient defensive try is 29 f4! f5 30 e5, blocking the position. Black has no immediate breakthrough, but he can torture White for a long, long time. The most likely winning plan is ...h3 in conjunction with ...d4, with the implication being that White is going to need to keep the d4-square blocked for as long as possible, presumably with a rook. Black may want to manoeuvre his knight to c6 in order to push the rook out of the way, but then, according to the exact position, White has two possible options open. He may choose either to retreat the rook, relying on the knight temporarily blocking the black bishop, or to leave the rook on d4, sacrificing the exchange, taking advantage of the ineffectiveness of Black's bad bishop as an attacking force. White has genuine chances of a successful defence in this line.

29...e5 30 ♖d2 f5! *(D)*

Such a position surely deserves a diagram! Could it be the pawn avalanche of the century? Tal seemed to think so in saying than such a mobilization of pawns had not been seen since the days of the Labourdonnais-McDonnell matches of the 1830s. The reader is invited to think of other more recent examples!

31 exd5

W



If 31 exf5, Tal (cited by Vasiliev) gives 31...♘f6 32 ♕h6 (32 f3 ♘h5 33 fxg4 ♘g3+ 34 ♔h2 d4) 32...h3 33 gxh3 d4+ 34 ♔h2 g3+ 35 ♖xg3 ♖xg3 36 fxg3 ♘g4+ winning the queen. It would not be a true pawn avalanche if the pawns did not recklessly roll down the board! But it turns out Black does not need to launch so many pawns, as 32...♘e4 (instead of 32...h3) mates after 33 ♕xd6? ♘xf2+ 34 ♔h2 g3#.

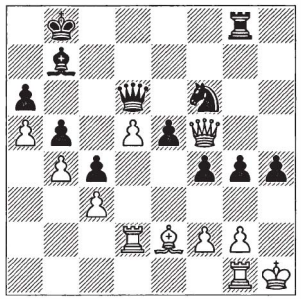
In theoretical terms, it makes more sense to take the centre pawn, but really Black's position is so powerful it does not make that much difference.

31...f4 32 ♕e4

32 ♕a7 is quietly but impressively answered by 32...e4 (Vasiliev).

32...♘f6 33 ♕f5+ ♔b8 *(D)*

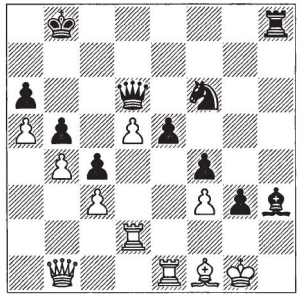
W



34 f3 ♗c8 35 ♕b1 g3 36 ♖e1 h3 37 ♗f1 ♖h8 38 gxh3 ♗xh3 39 ♔g1 *(D)*

39 ♗xh3? ♕d7.

B



39...♗xf1 40 ♔xf1

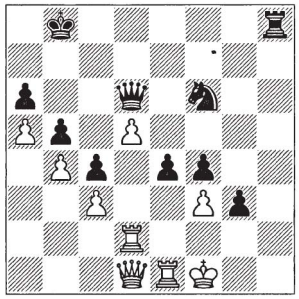
If 40 ♖xf1, then 40...♕d7!, and the black queen invades via either a7 or h3.

40...e4 41 ♕d1 *(D)*

41...♘g4

The sealed move. Such is the height of anticipation awakened by a tense World Championship match, that there was even speculation as to why Petrosian 'risked' a piece sacrifice to force resignation.

B



41...♕d7 (so that if White continues 42 ♖g2, then 42...♖h1+ 43 ♔e2 exf3+ 44 ♔xf3 ♕g4#) is neither stronger nor weaker.

42 fxg4 f3 43 ♖g2 fxg2+ 0-1

44 ♔xg2 ♕f4 soon mates.

A game worthy of Petrosian's favourite book, *My System.*

Game P7
Fischer – Petrosian
Santa Monica 1966
Sicilian Paulsen/Taimanov

After Petrosian's successful title defence against Spassky, he went through a barren patch, finishing on only 50% at both Santa Monica 1966 (Spassky 11½/18, Fischer 11, Larsen 10 ... Petrosian 9) and Moscow 1967 (Stein 11½/17, Gipslis, Bobotsov, Smyslov, Tal 10 ... Petrosian 8½). In these tournaments, Petrosian had particular difficulties at the hands of Larsen, who beat him twice at Santa Monica, and Portisch, who scored a win and a draw at Santa Monica and won a miniature at Moscow. Petrosian was able to overcome Spassky's attempts at psychic chess (some of Spassky's opening play had been exceptionally provocative), but he was at sea against both Larsen's improvisations and Portisch's ultra-methodical positional chess.

Such poor results for a World Champion naturally attracted press attention,

to which the only real reply is that Petrosian had come through an extremely demanding set of obstacles to gain his title *and then to retain it*. It is one thing to reach the top, but it is another matter to stay there. Arguably, one would have to go back as far as the Steinitz-Chigorin matches of the early 1890s to find the previous example of a reigning World Champion beating his most dangerous challenger outright in a title match.

Quite possibly Petrosian was a little lazy after his title defence. He had done what he had set out to do, so why should he do more?

A sportingly barren period is not likely to be rich in creative achievements, but the way in which Petrosian blunted Fischer's initiative and lead in development at Santa Monica is impressive. This game was played in round 9, at the end of the first half. Both Petrosian and Fischer looked out of touch, Petrosian having scored 3½/8, and Fischer only 3. After this game, Fischer played magnificently, with successive wins against Reshevsky, Portisch, Ivkov, Donner, Larsen and Najdorf being broken only by a draw against Unzicker.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 e6 5 ♘c3

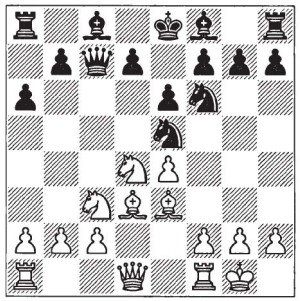
In the first game of his Candidates Match against Petrosian in 1971, Fischer was to prefer 5 ♘b5, but after 5...d6 6 ♗f4 (6 c4!?) 6...e5 7 ♗e3 ♘f6 8 ♗g5 ♗e6 9 ♘1c3 a6 10 ♗xf6 gxf6 11 ♘a3 was surprised by an innovation: 11...d5! 12 exd5 ♗xa3 13 bxa3 ♕a5 14 ♕d2 0-0-0 forced White on to the defensive. The older move was 11...♘d4, as played by Najdorf against Fischer at Santa Monica; 12 ♘c4 ±, as in Fischer-Taimanov, Vancouver Ct (6) 1970, is the appropriate reply.

5...♕c7 6 ♗e3 ♘f6 7 ♗d3

Petrosian noted surprise at this move, Fischer not having used this plan of development before. It is of course a perfectly normal move, but 7 ♗e2 is also standard.

7...a6 8 0-0 ♘e5 *(D)*

W



Petrosian attributes this move to Suetin. The knight is well placed here, and may quickly move to c4 or g4, as well as taking off the bishop. Black has to be careful though that in pursuing his counterplay he does not fall too far behind in development. In this game, Petrosian moves very close to the brink.

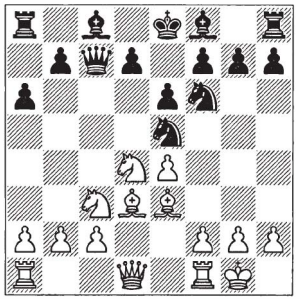
9 h3 *(D)*

Covering g4, and preparing f4.

In a recent game, Suetin himself tried 9 ♗e2!?, when 9...b5 10 f4 ♘c4 11 ♗xc4 ♕xc4 leads to the same position as in the Fischer-Petrosian game, except that Fischer had the pawn on h3 rather than h2. This difference is significant in some lines; for example, White cannot attempt to follow Fischer, and play 12 ♕d3?, in that 12...♕xd3 13 cxd3 ♘g4 leaves Black very comfortable. Suetin-Medvegy, Oberwart 1996 continued instead 12 e5 ♘d5 13 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 14 ♕e2 ♗b7 15 ♘b3 ♖c8 16 ♕f2 ♗e7 17 c3 ♕e4 18 ♖ad1 ♗d5 (if White's pawn were already on h3, then 18...♗h4 might prove irritating) 19 ♖d4 ♕f5 20 ♖d2 d6 21 ♘d4 ♕e4 22 exd6 ♗xd6 23 ♘e2 0-0 24 ♗d4 ♕g6 25 ♘g3 ±.

I leave it to the theoreticians to decide whether the pawn is better placed on h3 or on h2. If White wants a tense middlegame with queens on the board, the preference would be to compromise the kingside pawn-structure as little as possible, but if White, like Fischer, wants to aim for early simplification and a clear positional edge, keeping the knight out of g4 is the priority.

B



9...b5

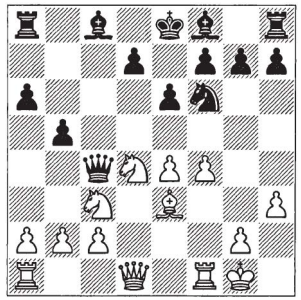
Again, as so often in the Sicilian, Black plays a move with worthy strategic intent, but which costs time for development. When White, as here, is fully developed, timing becomes very delicate. The modern inclination, perhaps partly as a result of this game, is to bring the pieces out with 9...♗c5 followed by ...d6.

No attempt is made here to summarise the theory, but it is worth noting that Petrosian was later to have a bad experience with 9...♗c5 10 ♕e2 d6 11 f4 ♘ed7?!. Black's tempo-devouring knight manoeuvre has left White with unchallenged central superiority, and in Spassky-Petrosian, Moscow Wch (23) 1969, Spassky built up a winning position, and then agreed the draw which secured the World Championship for him.

If even as subtle a player as Petrosian cannot get it right in this position at two attempts, the Sicilian must be an extremely demanding opening for the rest of us to play with success! In his notes in the tournament book (*Second Piatigorsky Cup*, ed. I. Kashdan), Petrosian admitted that he didn't really like the Paulsen System; he was just following fashion!

10 f4 ♘c4 11 ♗xc4 ♕xc4 *(D)*

W



12 ♕d3!

Typical Fischer, seeking a clear-cut positional advantage in an open if somewhat simplified position, rather than seeking his fortune in the more

complicated and more blocked position that arises after 12 e5 ♘d5 13 ♘xd5 ♕xd5. Analysis by Boleslavsky, cited by *ECO*, gives 14 ♕e2 ♗b7 15 ♘b3 ♖c8 16 c3 ♕c4 17 ♕f2 ♗d5 (thus far Vasiukov-Suetin, USSR Ch 1965), and now 18 ♖ad1 ♗e7 19 ♖d4 ♕c7 20 ♕g3 0-0 21 f5 ±, which is a valid try for an edge, but not conclusive. By analogy with Suetin-Medvegy (see note to Black's 8th), Black could perhaps try 16...♕e4!?.

12...d5!

Petrosian now has to make some tough defensive decisions. The move he plays ensures that whatever happens, he keeps some sort of pawn presence in the centre.

12...♗b7?! is a more natural-looking move, in that it brings the bishop into play along the diagonal which had been prepared for it for several moves. However, Petrosian notes that the reply 13 a4! would have been strong. Then 13...♘xe4? fails to 14 ♘xe4 ♕d5 15 axb5, when Black's queenside collapses, so 13...♕xd3 14 cxd3 is critical. Petrosian notes that after 14...b4 15 ♘ce2 ♗e7 16 ♘b3, White is doing well. Black's queenside will come under severe pressure, while White's centre is rock solid.

In this line, 14...bxa4!? is an interesting alternative. The pawn-structure becomes more symmetrical, making it difficult for White to claim his pawn-structure is intrinsically better, and Black might perhaps harbour hopes of making use of his bishop-pair. The problem is of course that as a result of his protracted queenside manoeuvring, Black is well behind in development. Play might continue 15 ♘xa4 ♗e7 16 ♖fc1 ♖c8 17 ♖xc8+ (it is important to do this before Black has castled) 17...♗xc8 18 ♘b3 0-0 19 ♘b6 ♗b7 20 ♘a5 ♗a8. It might at first look as though Black has satisfactorily covered the queenside, but play suddenly switches to the other flank. 21 g4! puts the d-pawn under siege. Then:

1) 21...♗d8 22 ♘xa8 ♗xa5 23 ♖xa5 ♖xa8 24 b4 ♖b8 (otherwise b5) 25 ♖xa6 and White wins a crucial pawn.

2) 21...d5? 22 e5 d4 23 exf6 ♗c5 24 ♘d7 wins material.

3) 21...d6 22 g5 ♘h5 23 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 24 ♘c6 ♗f8 25 b4 followed by b5.

4) 21...h6 22 g5 hxg5 23 fxg5 ♘h7 24 h4 ♖d8 25 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 26 ♘c4 ♗f8 (White threatened 27 ♘b6 ♖a7 28 ♘c8; if 26...♗d8, then 27 b4) 27 ♘b6 ♖a7 28 ♖c1 (28 b4?! ♖b7! is less clear) and Black is under severe pressure.

After 12...♗b7?!, White should be able to convert his temporary advantage in development into a permanent advantage in piece mobility. Black will find it difficult to prevent his a6-pawn from becoming a permanent weakness, while White's b2-pawn is almost impossible to attack.

The remaining question is to see what happens if he immediately exchanges queens with 12...♕xd3 13 cxd3. The basic presumption is that Black's lack of development will tell against him, and that White will be able to force significant weaknesses on the queenside. Thus 13...b4 14 ♘a4 is unappealing for Black, as White's rooks soon hit the open c-file, while if 13...♗e7, White can if he likes change

tack with 14 e5!? ♘g8 15 ♘e4. 14 a4 and 14 ♖fc1 are of course also possible.

Petrosian seems to have chosen correctly.

13 e5 ♘d7 14 ♕xc4 dxc4

Petrosian does not examine 14...bxc4 in the tournament book, although it should be noted that the players were asked for general commentary rather than detailed analysis.

White's most incisive reply would be, as in the game, 15 f5; for example, 15...♘c5 (15...♘xe5 16 ♗f4!) 16 fxe6 fxe6 17 b4! cxb3 (17...♘b7 18 a3 ±) 18 axb3, and Black has both tactical problems (for example, 18...♖b8 19 ♘c6 ♖b6 20 ♘a7! followed by ♖xf8+ and ♗xc5) and positional problems (rigid pawn-structure; lack of development).

The recapture with the d-pawn, though breaking the rule of thumb 'capture towards the centre', preserves options of counterplay on the long diagonal. It also eliminates any danger that White may make a target of the pawn on d5.

15 f5!

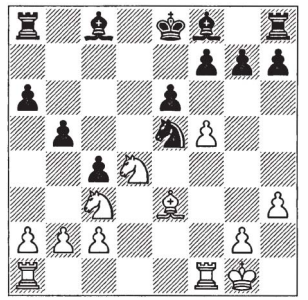
Now that Black has an additional flank pawn on the queenside, 15 a4? is no longer troublesome, as 15...b4 gives Black a safe and mobile queenside pawn-structure. The pawn on c4 helps to bind Black's queenside.

Black's last move took a pawn away from the centre, at a time when he is poorly developed and uncastled. To make progress, White must open the centre quickly!

15...♘xe5! *(D)*

"A crucial and obviously correct decision" – Petrosian, who goes on to note that 15...♘c5 16 fxe6 fxe6 17 ♖ad1 gives White effortless positional pressure.

W



16 fxe6!

Fischer's straightforward move will regain the pawn and neutralize Black's bishop-pair, while keeping his advantage in piece mobility.

16 ♗f4!? is a sharp alternative, with Petrosian's notes revealing an interesting difference of opinion between the two players as to how Black should defend. Petrosian relates that Fischer rejected 16 ♗f4 because of 16...f6, but that he himself did not like the pawn move, and was going to continue 16...♘d7!? 17 fxe6 ♘f6. Petrosian's defensive plan here is striking; he resolutely avoids making concessions in his pawn-structure, and spends time shifting the knight to its safest square, while waiting for the momentum of White's pawn-storm to burn itself out. 18 ♖ad1 ♗c5 is comfortable for Black, and 18 e7 ♗xe7 19 ♖ae1 ♔f8 leaves White no convincing follow-up. Attention turns to 18 exf7+ ♔xf7 19 ♗e5, which looks formidable, but Black's position is fine if he uses his bishops: 19...♗b7! (cutting out both

♘e4 and ♘d5) 20 ♘f5 ♗c5+ 21 ♔h1 ♖he8 22 ♗d6 ♗b6 and Black's defences hold; for example, 23 ♗a3 ♗c7, or 23 ♗g3 ♗c5, when White can take a draw with 24 ♗d6. There is a pleasing Steinitzian minimalism about this plan; avoid weakening pawn moves, look for chances to activate your pieces, and the defensive ideas will come almost automatically.

Why though did 16...f6 cause divergent opinions among the two players? Presumably after 17 ♗xe5 fxe5 18 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 19 fxe6, the *weakness* of the pawn on e6 would be of concern to White, while the *strength* of the pawn would be of concern to Black! After 19...♗c5+ 20 ♔h1 ♖f8, over-directness by White would lead to disappointment; for example, 21 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 22 ♘d5 (22 ♖f1 ♔e7 23 ♘d5+ ♔d6 24 ♖d1 ♖a7!) 22...♖d8 23 ♖d1 ♖d6 and Black will be able to follow up with ...♔d8!, when the e-pawn will finally be under threat.

White's most reliable move would seem to be 21 ♘e4, which keeps the knight strong, even though it makes it more difficult to defend against a later ...♔e7. 21...♗e7 22 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 23 ♖f1 has several trappy points (e.g., 23...♔e7?! 24 ♘g5 h6? {24...♔d6 ±} 25 ♘h7 followed by ♖f7+ winning a piece), but 23...♖d8! keeps Black in the game.

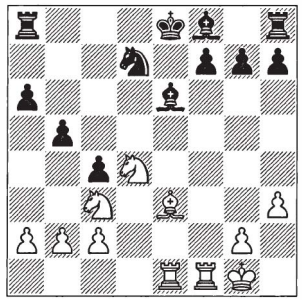
Either defence to 16 ♗f4 is acceptable; one cannot say either player was 'wrong'. Petrosian's preferred defence of 16...♘d7 makes no concessions and neutralizes the attack surprisingly effectively. The natural end result is a clear draw. Fischer's idea (or at least, the move he was worried about) of 16...f6 does not break White's initiative, but leads to sharp positions where either side could easily go wrong, despite the reduced material. It is the move to play if one needs to win.

Before leaving 16 ♗f4, a couple of tactical points need to be noted. A third defence, 16...♗c5?, misfires after 17 ♗xe5 f6 18 ♘e4! fxe5 19 ♘xc5 exd4 20 fxe6; Black has the wrong colour bishop to defend this type of position, and White's pieces dominate. If 20...♖a7, White secures the position of his knight with 21 b4.

After Petrosian's 16...♘d7, White could consider playing 17 ♘d5, when 17...exd5? fails to 18 ♖ae1+ ♔d8? 19 ♘c6#. 17...♗c5 18 ♘c7+ ♔d8 19 ♘xa8 ♗xd4+ 20 ♔h1 e5 21 ♖ad1 ♗b7 is critical, when White is unable to avoid material disadvantage. Such lines help explain why so often White, when intending or playing f4 in a Sicilian, slips in ♔h1 as a precautionary measure against surprises on the a7-g1 diagonal.

16...♗xe6 17 ♖ae1 ♘d7 *(D)*

W



18 ♘xe6

18 ♘d5!? is an interesting try, but Black with care is holding:

1) 18...♗xd5?! 19 ♗g5+ ♘e5! (not 19...♗e6? 20 ♘xe6 fxe6 21 ♖xe6+ +–) 20 ♖xe5+ ♗e6 21 ♘xe6 fxe6, and then:

1a) 22 ♖xe6+ ♔d7, although safe enough for White, does not give any clear advantage, and Black is ready to complete his development with gain of tempo by playing ...♗c5+ followed by challenging rooks.

1b) 22 ♖d1! forces Black to defend carefully with 22...♔f7! 23 ♖d7+ ♔g6, and if 24 ♖xe6+, then not 24...♔xg5? 25 ♖d5+ ♔f4 26 ♔f2, when g3# follows, but rather 24...♔f5!!, when the rook has no good retreat and White must lose the bishop. Justice ought to prevail every so often however, and a closer look at the position suggests that Black has a very difficult game after 24 ♗e3!. Such a move can be psychologically difficult to see, as it masks White's attack on the e-pawn, and apparently abandons hope of quickly recovering the pawn. It is more important though to prevent Black from getting his kingside pieces developed, and after the quiet bishop retreat, ♗d4 is a dangerous possibility, while White may also play to double rooks on the seventh.

2) 18...♗d6 19 ♗f4 ♗xf4 20 ♘xe6! favours White.

3) 18...0-0-0! was presumably Petrosian's intended defence, and if 19 ♘xe6, then 19...fxe6 20 ♘b6+ ♘xb6 21 ♗xb6 ♖d6 22 ♗c5 ♖d8 23 ♗xf8 ♖hxf8 24 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 25 ♖xe6 ♖d8! and the endgame is tenable for Black. Or 19 ♘f4 ♖e8!, and Black has e6 adequately covered.

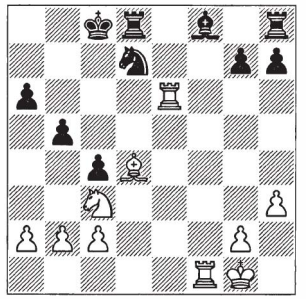
Castling as a defensive move is all too easily overlooked, particularly if, as here, the king remains in an exposed position, but this special move has *double* significance in that, uniquely, two pieces move! Here the king gets out of any trouble on the e-file, while the queen's rook quickly and efficiently brings itself to the centre, with the dual possibility either of playing down the d-file, or coming to e8 to protect e6.

18...fxe6 19 ♗d4

If 19 ♗g5, then 19...e5!, and the pawn on e5 will hold up for long enough for Black to complete his development and coordinate his forces. White must be careful here that Black does not safely maintain his extra pawn.

19...0-0-0 20 ♖xe6 *(D)*

B



Of this position, Petrosian freely admits that "White's play has been logical while Black has long been balancing on an abyss". He relates that Fischer was "feeling, not without foundation, that the agony of Black's army had begun." However, some tactical resources save Black.

Chess is not a game of chance, and yet it is surely fair to say that Petrosian is 'lucky' that his position holds, and

that White has nothing concrete in terms of a win after 16 ♗f4 or in the current position. Petrosian readily concedes that something has gone wrong for him. In his notes he grumbles about the whole Paulsen system which, he says, "leads to a very modest activity by Black on the queenside at the price of delaying the kingside development." From the diagram, we may see what he means! Today's theory suggests that 9...b5 was where Black's game slipped.

Let us say that 9...b5 was a mistake. And let us say that when Petrosian played it, he did not have in mind all the details of the tactical resources he would later require in order to save the game. This seems a safe enough assumption. Then 'luck' is as good a word as any to describe the situation where a mistake might happen to be decisive or non-decisive. It is important to appreciate that there are positions where you cannot be sure whether your position is defensible or not. Then you have to play the best moves you can, avoiding the moves that present the opponent with a clear and simple technical win, and seeking the lines which give some margin of hope for survival. You *hope* that your earlier mistake is non-decisive, and that with correct play you can stay in the game, even if your opponent plays well. You *fear* that if your opponent plays correctly he will win, whatever you do. In either case the defensive task is identical – the search for variations which do not give the opponent the win on a plate. In middlegames, there is little need for any deep thinking about whether you are 'objectively lost', or 'significantly worse but not losing'; the important thing is to knuckle down to the defensive task in hand.

Of course luck and skill are interrelated; if you defend well and your opponent attacks not so well, you increase your chances of survival. As Capablanca famously said, "the good player is always lucky".

20...♘c5!

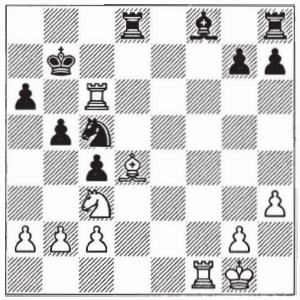
A long preamble to saying that this move survives! Petrosian starts to reap the benefits of the care he took in the earlier play, especially with 14...dxc4, to keep the queenside pawns potentially mobile.

21 ♖c6+

Not 21 ♖xf8?? ♘xe6. The text is the only good move by the e6-rook, in view of the discovered attack on the bishop.

21...♔b7 *(D)*

W



22 ♖xc5 ♖xd4 23 ♖cf5

The natural move is 23 ♖f7+, and if 23...♔b6, then 24 ♖c8, with an apparently decisive pin. However, Petrosian had prepared a tactical counter-blow: 24...♗c5!, and after 25 ♖xh8 ♖f4+ 26 ♔h2 ♖xf7 27 ♖xh7, Black can draw with 27...♗d6+ 28 ♔g1 (28 g3 ♖f2+ ∓) 28...♗c5+; a successful defence. He might also be able to try for more.

23...♗d6 *(D)*

W

24 ♖f7+

Black's position is now looking very solid, and his queenside pawns are starting to look dangerous. Fischer decides that an extra kingside pawn is due reward for his earlier efforts, and if he does not take the pawn, Black will have a clear, if maybe slight, advantage. In the rest of the game, White's extra pawn provides him with the margin of safety. If, for example, Black should ever succeed in getting at the pawn on a2, White will have plenty of time to create a passed pawn on the kingside.

24...♔c6 25 ♖xg7 b4 26 ♘a4 ♖d5 27 b3 ♗e5

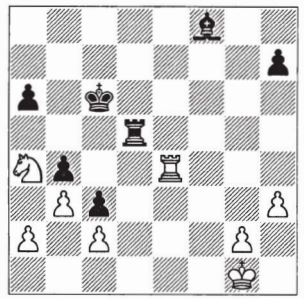
27...c3? 28 ♖a7! – Petrosian.

28 ♖e7 c3 29 ♖e6+ ♗d6 30 ♖e4 ♖f8

The last major defensive decision. Black must bear in mind that if White's two rooks start to cooperate, a mating net could suddenly appear. For example, imagine that White has already played ♖f7; then he has 1 ♖c4+ ♔b5? 2 ♘xc3+ bxc3 3 ♖b7+ ♔a5 4 ♖a4#. To avoid all this, Black forces the exchange of rooks.

31 ♖xf8 ♗xf8 *(D)*

W

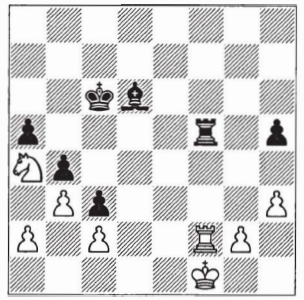


32 ♔f2 ♗d6 33 ♖e2 ♖f5+ 34 ♔e3 a5 35 ♖f2 ♖e5+ 36 ♔f3 ♖f5+ 37 ♔e2 ♖e5+ 38 ♔f1?!

Seriously tempting fate. Repeating the position, and keeping the king active, with 38 ♔f3, is simpler.

38...h5 39 ♖e2 ♖f5+ 40 ♖f2 *(D)*

B



½-½

Petrosian should not have agreed a draw just yet. He is not losing, and he might even have chances of winning, given the passivity of White's knight. The sensible option would have been to reach the time-control with 40...♖d5!,

and then see how White handles the position in the second session. White could, for example, face problems on the kingside and along his second rank if Black is allowed to play ...♗g3, and if 41 g4, then 41...h4!?.

Readers of *My 60 Memorable Games* will recall another occasion where Petrosian was a little too willing to take Fischer's draw. He often seemed content with a half-point and a defensive job well done, when with more persistence he could have caused his opponents considerable problems. The switch from defence to attack is psychologically not easy, but the reverse process for the opponent may be even harder!

Game P8
Fischer – Petrosian
Buenos Aires Ct (5) 1971
Petroff Defence

If ever there was a match that could be described as 'irresistible force versus immovable object', the 1971 Candidates Match between Fischer and Petrosian was it. Fischer, it will be recalled, had thrashed both Taimanov and Larsen by 6-0 (no draws!) and could already be regarded as the most dominant player in chess history. Previously, only Morphy, over a century earlier, and perhaps Lasker briefly in the late 1890s, could be regarded as so far ahead of his contemporaries, but Fischer's task was all the more impressive in that he had the awesome might of the Soviet school of chess to deal with, whereas only a few of Lasker's opponents, and none of Morphy's, could be described as being of even modern IM strength. One of the great unwritten books is Fischer's own account of his glory years from 1970 to 1972; sadly, it looks like this book will never be written. It is too easily forgotten that *My 60 Memorable Games* stops when Fischer was still in his early twenties, and does not cover his peak years. I doubt alas that we shall ever see the sequel.

In the meantime, who could stop Fischer, or even slow him down, in the early 1970s? Not Larsen, even though he was spoken of by many in the West as being a possible world champion. Instead, the task fell to the old guard of Petrosian and Spassky; Fischer had to defeat both in turn in order to become World Champion.

For a while, Petrosian seemed to have the upper hand in his match with Fischer. He should have won the first game, but went astray and lost. He won the second with a kingside attack. He had much the better of the draws in games 3, 4 and 5. Although the score was only 2½-2½, on the run of play it could easily have been 4-1 to Petrosian. The tide turned abruptly. Petrosian chose a passive system as White in game 6, and Fischer responded with straightforward classical chess, his strongest point. Fischer won, took the lead, and Petrosian's resistance had been broken. The rest of the match saw the American giving the former World Champion some hard lessons in positional chess. Fischer won 6½-2½, and then went on to beat Spassky.

The third game of the match has already been given (Game L6.1). Here is the fifth game, with Petrosian being confronted with that most common of all defensive tasks – how to ensure that a slight disadvantage from the opening is not allowed to become a serious disadvantage.

1 e4 e5

Petrosian had won the opening battles in games 1 and 3 with a Sicilian and a French; he switches opening again to try to stay ahead of Fischer's repair work.

2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘xe5 d6 4 ♘f3 ♘xe4 5 d4 ♘f6

Already Petrosian indicates his willingness to play a defensive game, with less space but no weaknesses that can be attacked. Black is committed to playing with a restricted pawn-centre for a long time to come, since if, for example, 6 ♗d3 d5?, he has lost two whole tempi.

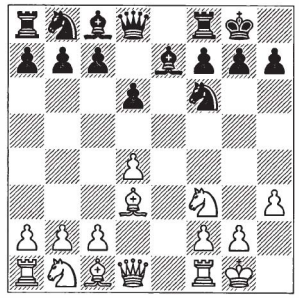
A more classically open game, with tactical opportunities for both sides, results after 5...d5 6 ♗d3 ♗e7 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 c4. White tries to undermine the knight on e4, since Black will have lost time if the knight retreats. Black, meanwhile, tries to attack the white centre with 8...♗g4 or 8...♘b4.

6 ♗d3 ♗e7

Petrosian and Suetin suggest the alternative 6...♗g4!? in *Informator*.

7 h3 0-0 8 0-0 *(D)*

B



8...c6

A natural and insignificant-looking move it would be all too easy to let pass by without comment. Yet not long before this game, Fischer crushed Gheorghiu, who concentrated on piece development, without taking care of his queenside pawn-structure. Play continued 8...♖e8 9 c4 ♘c6?! 10 ♘c3 h6 11 ♖e1 with a clear advantage to White; see Supplementary Game P8.1. How does the defender frustrate this type of plan? If simple development leads to such an awful game, and if Black cannot contest the pawn-centre, then what can Black do?

It is noteworthy that whereas Gheorghiu developed his knight to c6, Petrosian put his pawn there. Since White has already blocked out Black's ...♗g4 with the prophylactic 7 h3, the amount of pressure that the c6-knight may exert on the d4-pawn is strictly limited, and it is not wholly clear that there is any other reason why c6 should be a better square for the knight than the more flexible, more defensive d7. On the contrary, in the Gheorghiu game, White later gained a tempo by attacking the c6-knight with d5, forcing the knight into a long detour

(...♘c6-b4-a6-c5) to get back into the game. Black also had to create a highly inflexible pawn-structure on the queenside to prevent White from pushing the knight away with b4.

Petrosian's approach is more realistic. Instead of leaving the knight exposed to attack on c6, he plays the pawn to c6. The extra cover it provides for the d5-square will probably be useful later on, and Black may think about creating a bit of space on the queenside with a later ...a6 and ...b5. White has nothing immediate to attack, and so Black has the opportunity, indeed the obligation, to spend a little time creating the most harmonious deployments possible for his pieces.

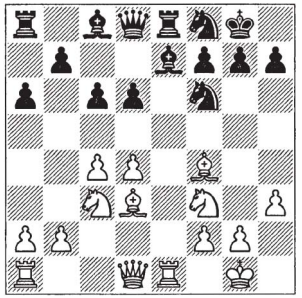
Smyslov was also experimenting with this system of the Petroff at around the same time, and like Petrosian concentrated on piece flexibility rather than over-rapid (and ineffective) development. See Supplementary Games P8.2 and P8.3. While Smyslov sought equality in terms of piece manoeuvring behind the lines, doing as little as possible with his pawns, Petrosian was more interested in setting up a pawn barrier on the queenside. Does this mean anything more than differences in playing style? I suspect not.

9 ♖e1 ♘bd7 10 ♗f4 ♖e8 11 c4 ♘f8

The same manoeuvre as in the Tal-Smyslov game (P8.3), but Petrosian has prevented White from gaining space with d5.

12 ♘c3 a6 *(D)*

W



If we may describe a characteristic pawn formation of Black's in the English and Sicilian as a 'hedgehog' (black pawns on a6, b6, d6 and e6, the c-pawn having been exchanged for the white d-pawn), then perhaps the pawn-structure in the diagram may be described as a 'porcupine'. In either case, the barricade of black pawns on the third rank makes it difficult for White to gain space in Black's half of the board. Defensively pawns are at their most secure when they are on the same rank, since any pawn which has for some reason to advance will still be protected by its colleagues. A later ...b6 will leave four black queenside pawns abreast, but if Black wants to be a little more aggressive, he may want to challenge White's c-pawn with ...b5.

Black is defending with pieces on the kingside, and with pawns on the queenside. It is only on the queenside that White may attack, but should he attack with pieces or pawns?

13 ♕b3?!

This might be effective if Black does nothing on the queenside, but Petrosian plays vigorously to take the initiative.

White has three plausible pawn moves on the queenside, and it is possible that any of these would have given Petrosian more difficulties than the move actually chosen. These are 13 d5!? (*Informator*), 13 b4!? (*ECO*) and 13 a4!?.

1) 13 d5 marks out some territory in the centre. It is well known that the basic pawn-structure after 13...c5 14 a4 tends to favour White; Black's queenside activity is eliminated, and White has a free hand to build up piece pressure. A more realistic defensive try is 13...cxd5 14 cxd5 ♘g6 15 ♗e3 (targeting the queenside is more profitable than aiming at the well-defended d-pawn) 15...♗f8 16 ♕b3!? (16 ♘a4?! is met by 16...♗d7, when White must avoid 17 ♗b6?? ♗xa4 and 17 ♘b6?? ♖xe3) 16...♘e5 17 ♗e2, with perhaps a slight edge to White.

2) 13 b4 gains space, with most of the obvious transformations in pawn-structure being in White's favour; for example, 13...d5 14 c5, 13...a5 14 b5, or 13...b5 14 d5 bxc4 (14...cxd5 15 cxb5) 15 ♗xc4. Black can do nothing immediately constructive on the queenside, but since there is no direct threat, at least he has time to untangle his kingside pieces by 13...♘e6 14 ♗h2 ♗f8, with perhaps ...g6 and ...♗g7 to follow at a later stage. If Black can open up either the c-file or the h8-a1 long diagonal, White may come to have cause to regret his b4 move, but this is still a long way off in an indistinct future.

3) 13 a4!? gains space on the queenside without compromising his pawn-structure. If 13...c5, then 14 d5 with advantage to White. Meanwhile, White aims to fix the queenside with a5, but if 13...a5 14 d5 White can press Black on the light squares. Possibly Black will want to erect another porcupine quill with 13...b6!?.

Black has not yet equalized, but if he plays carefully he is still in the game.

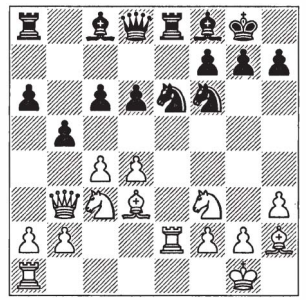
13...♘e6 14 ♗h2 ♗f8 15 ♖e2

Fischer's plan takes shape, and is directed against any attempt by Black to free his kingside pieces. If, for example, 15...g6 16 ♖ae1 ♗g7 17 ♗b1, White is ready to play ♕d1 and d5, with considerable central pressure. It clearly helps White that he has not spent time unnecessarily advancing queenside pawns.

If, though, White refuses to restrain Black's queenside pawns, then Black can and must challenge White with a pawn-push.

15...b5! *(D)*

W



Black now splits White's central pawn couple, and this is an undoubted gain, even if Black's own pawns on c6 and d6 will need extra defending. The position of the white queen is awkward, in that the direct counter-attack against Black's pawns with 16 d5? is met by 16...♘c5.

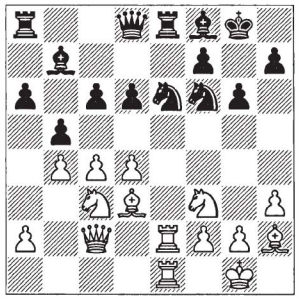
16 ♖ae1 ♗b7 17 ♕c2

17 a4?! is ineffective due to 17...♖b8 (Petrosian).

17...g6 18 b4?! *(D)*

Presumably with hopes of blotting out the bishop by playing c5. It is a measure of the degree of freedom that Black has created for himself that White can see the bishop as any sort of threat. It is possible that White was already worse without this extra weakening of the queenside, as d4 is under pressure.

B



18...bxc4?!

There is definitely a question of personal style in chess. Different players think about positions in different ways, approach the truth by different methods. Usually if there is a single strongest move, strong players with radically different styles will find it. If there are alternative moves of roughly equal strength, maybe one quiet and positional, the other sharp and combinative, strong players with different styles will choose differently. There is, however, a grey area where a player's style, his characteristic mode of chess thought, will cause him to pick a substandard move or miss an opportunity. Much of what is described as 'psychological chess', in the hands of skilful practitioners such as Lasker, is the attempt to drive the opponent into one of these grey areas.

Petrosian here finds an elegant defensive plan, building a pawn fortress in the centre which completely blocks White's initiative. However, there is a more aggressive way of thinking about the position. White had the advantage once, but, Black could argue, his clumsy play has lost that advantage, and White's queenside position may be regarded as over-extended. All White's queenside pawns are potentially weak, and if the a8-h1 diagonal were to be opened up, ...♗xf3 would be a real threat. Black's position, according to this reasoning, is ripe for counter-attack. So far Black has played the position in impeccable Petrosian mode, but a deft switch to Lasker or Tal mode with 18...a5!, radically destabilizing the position, could have worked wonders. Then:

1) 19 bxa5 b4 20 ♘e4 ♘xe4 21 ♗xe4 ♖xa5!, with a positional advantage. White's pawns on d4 and a2 both come under pressure, and Black has the chance of gaining further space on the queenside with a later ...♖a3. Black is also looking for a chance to fix the pawn-structure with ...d5; an immediate 21...d5 would have allowed White an unclear rook sacrifice with 22 ♗xg6 hxg6 23 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 24 ♖xe6 fxe6 25 ♕xg6+ ♗g7 26 ♗e5 ♕e7 27 ♘g5 (when 27...dxc4 seems critical), or more simply, 22 ♗d3 and then ♗e5.

2) An immediate 19 ♗xg6? is too slow: 19...hxg6 20 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 21 ♖xe6 fxe6 22 ♕xg6+ ♗g7, and White has nothing. The sacrifice is effective only if Black has already diverted some pieces from the kingside.

3) 19 cxb5 cxb5! (19...axb4 20 bxc6 ♗xc6 21 ♘e4 is probably about equal) 20 ♗xb5 ♗xf3 21 gxf3 (21 ♗xe8 ♗xe2 wins material for Black) 21...♘xd4 22 ♖xe8 ♘xe8! (22...♘xc2 23 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 24 ♖c1 ♘xb4 wins a pawn, but is not so clear after 25 ♘e4) and Black is in control.

4) 19 d5 cxd5 20 cxd5 ♘xd5 21 ♗xb5 (21 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 22 ♗xb5? ♗xf3 23 ♗xe8 {23 gxf3 ♕g5+ wins the bishop} 23...♗xe2 and Black wins material) 21...♘xc3! 22 ♕xc3 ♗xf3! 23 ♕xf3 (23 ♗xe8 ♗xe2; 23 gxf3 ♕g5+) 23...♘d4 24 ♕xa8 ♘xe2+ 25 ♖xe2 ♕xa8 26 ♖xe8 ♕d5 and Black should win.

5) 19 a3 merely aims to hold the status quo on the queenside, but in view of the lines given earlier, this may be no bad thing. After 19...axb4 20 axb4, the opening of the a-file and the freeing of the a6-square for the bishop give Black rather more freedom than in the actual game. After 20...bxc4 21 ♗xc4 d5 22 ♗d3 it is unwise to try snatching the pawn with 22...♗xb4?!, in view of 23 ♖b1, and if 23...♕a5? (23...♗xc3 24 ♕xc3 ±; Black's extra pawn is ultimately unsustainable), then 24 ♘a2. Instead, Black keeps a safe and steady position with good long-term prospects after, for example, 22...♗a6!?.

A missed opportunity by Petrosian therefore, but even this is an indirect tribute to his careful defensive play earlier on. How many other players could have converted such an apparently uninspiring opening to something advantageous against Fischer at his peak?

19 ♗xc4 ♘c7

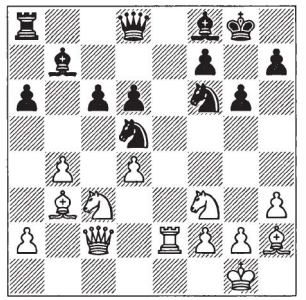
Now 19...d5?! is less effective, in view of 20 ♗d3 ♗xb4 21 ♖b1 ♕a5 22 ♘a4 (Petrosian), when Black is in trouble on the b-file.

20 ♗b3?!

Possibly underestimating Petrosian's defensive idea. Because of Black's failure to play 18...a5!, the initiative has reverted to White, who has rather more space to play with. To maintain his initiative, White must divert one of the knights from control of d5. 20 ♖xe8! is the indicated move, and after 20...♘cxe8 21 ♕b3! d5 22 ♗d3 (Petrosian and Suetin), White has the more attractive position.

20...♖xe2! 21 ♖xe2 ♘cd5! *(D)*

W



Typical Petrosian, accepting doubled isolated pawns in the centre in order to keep a pawn guard on all the key central squares. Indeed, he used the same idea in an earlier stage of the Candidates cycle, in his seventh game against Hübner (Game P8.4). This was the only decisive game of the match, so Petrosian would have had fond memories of the doubled central pawns.

When compared with the Hübner game, three things run in Petrosian's favour here.

1) Aside from the doubled pawns, the rest of Black's pawn-structure is absolutely secure, with no open lines for White to get at any of the black pawns.

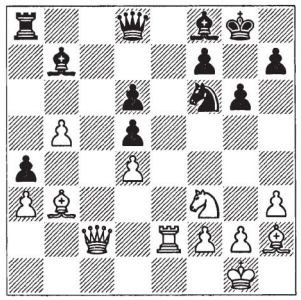
2) Black still has the bishop-pair, and these bishops provide protection for the doubled pawns on both colour squares. This helps enhance Black's central grip.

3) The effectiveness of White's minor pieces is severely limited by the pawn barrier.

In the Hübner game, the queenside was much more open; this cut both ways.

22 a3 a5 23 ♘xd5 cxd5 24 b5 a4 *(D)*

W



25 ♗a2

If 25 ♗xa4 ♕a5, it is not Black's pawns that are going to drop!

Fischer now has to defend carefully.

25...♕b6

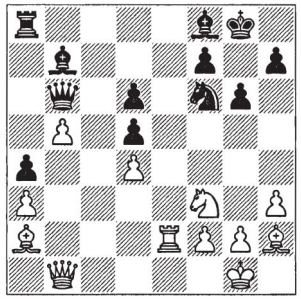
25...♕a5!? (Petrosian and Suetin).

26 ♕b1 *(D)*

Since if 26 ♕d3, Black wins the b-pawn with 26...♖a5 27 ♖b2 ♗a6! (Petrosian and Suetin).

26...♖a5?!

B



The one weakness in Petrosian's play that prevented him from being regarded as a super-champion of the calibre of Kasparov, Fischer and Karpov was his reluctance to take the initiative. He was, I believe, the only player (given that Tal was in poor health) with the talent and ability to stop Fischer in the 1969-72 World Championship cycle – but he always seemed to hold back.

We have already seen this earlier in this very game – and now Petrosian for the second time throws his advantage away. The player who is capable of such exceptional subtlety in defence allows himself to be side-tracked by a superficial attack on a pawn, for which Fischer is ready. It can only be assumed that time-pressure was a factor. The natural and strong move is 26...♘e4!:

a) If then 27 ♖b2, not 27...♖a5? 28 ♗f4 transposing into the game, but rather 27...♗h6!, when White is close to zugzwang. If, for example, 28 ♕d3, then 28...♖c8 29 ♖c2 ♖xc2 30 ♕xc2 ♕xb5 31 ♕c7 ♕b2 and Black breaks through.

b) Or 27 ♕b4 ♗h6! 28 ♖c2 (otherwise ...♖c8) 28...♖a5 29 ♖b2 ♕c7 30 g4 (30 b6 ♕c1+ 31 ♘e1 ♘d2 –+) 30...♖a8 31 ♔g2 ♗c1 32 ♖e2. White has now more or less got his queenside covered, partly because the weakness of Black's three queenside pawns means that the mobility of his pieces is restricted. With the queenside and centre in equilibrium, the natural place to look to open play is the kingside; this suggests 32...h5!, which successfully breaks up White's kingside pawns at a time when it is difficult for White to switch pieces from the queenside.

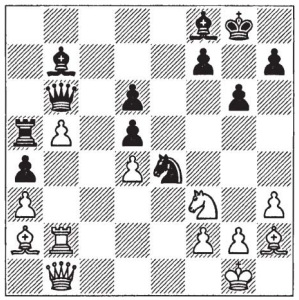
c) Or 27 ♖c2 ♖a5, and if 28 ♖b2 Black is a tempo ahead of the game; maybe 28...♗h6.

d) The exchange sacrifice 27 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 28 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 29 ♕xe4 is pointless, in view of 29...♕xb5.

27 ♖b2 ♘e4?! *(D)*

Right plan, but wrong move-order. 27...♗h6! keeps White's dark-squared bishop out of play. Black would still be in control, although to make progress he might have to retreat his rook to a8 at some stage.

W



28 ♗f4!

White gets his pieces back in order. At first it might appear that Black still has time to build on the kingside with, for example, 28...h6, but there are tactical difficulties after 29 ♕d3 ♗c6? 30 bxc6! ♕xb2 31 c7 ♕b7 32 ♗xd5 ♕xc7 (32...♖xd5 33 ♕xe4 followed by ♕xd5 wins for White) 33 ♕xe4 and White should win.

28...♘c3

Petrosian therefore decides to play for safety.

29 ♕c2 ♖xb5

White's bishop is so awful, and Black's knight so strong, that it would be a bargain for White if Black were to win a pawn with 29...♘xa2?! 30 ♖xa2 ♕xb5 31 ♖b2. Black would have potential back-rank problems, and the extra doubled pawn would be no threat to White.

30 ♖xb5 ♘xb5 31 ♕xa4 ♕a6 32 ♕xa6 ♗xa6 33 ♗e3

Not 33 ♗xd5?? ♘c3!, when Black wins one of the bishops. It might have worked against a much lesser player!

33...♘xa3 34 ♗xd5 ♗c4 35 ♗c6 ♘c2 36 ♗d2 ♗e2 37 ♗e4 ♗xf3 38 ♗xc2 ♗d5 ½-½

An absorbing if unspectacular battle, and one of the many might-have-beens of chess.

Supplementary Games

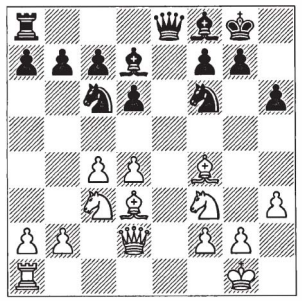
Game P8.1
Fischer – Gheorghiu
Buenos Aires 1970
Petroff Defence

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘xe5 d6 4 ♘f3 ♘xe4 5 d4 ♗e7 6 ♗d3 ♘f6 7 h3 0-0 8 0-0 ♖e8 9 c4 ♘c6?!

For the more flexible 9...♘bd7, see Game P8.3.

10 ♘c3 h6 11 ♖e1 ♗f8 12 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 13 ♗f4 ♗d7 14 ♕d2 *(D)*

B



White now has an unchallenged advantage in both space and piece mobility, with Black unable even to consider any pawn challenges in the centre. The next task is to increase the pressure, to try to *force* some form of structural weakness in the opposing position.

14...♕c8

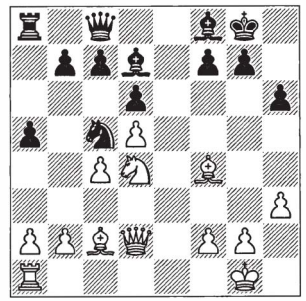
Hoping for relief by exchanging bishops with ...♗f5.

15 d5 ♘b4 16 ♘e4! ♘xe4

16...♘xd3 17 ♘xf6+ wrecks Black's kingside pawns.

17 ♗xe4 ♘a6 18 ♘d4 ♘c5 19 ♗c2 a5 *(D)*

W



Entrenching the knight, but one well-placed minor piece is not as good as three. Fischer now sees that Black's kingside is under-protected, in part precisely because the black knight is locked up on the queenside, and so he swings his rook across.

20 ♖e1 ♕d8 21 ♖e3 b6 22 ♖g3 ♔h8 23 ♘f3 ♕e7 24 ♕d4 ♕f6 25 ♕xf6 gxf6 26 ♘d4 ♖e8 27 ♖e3 ♖b8 28 b3 b5 29 cxb5 ♗xb5 30 ♘f5 ♗d7 31 ♘xh6 ♖b4 32 ♖g3 ♗xh6 33 ♗xh6 ♘e4 34 ♗g7+ ♔h7 35 f3 1-0

Game P8.2

Bronstein – Smyslov

USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1971

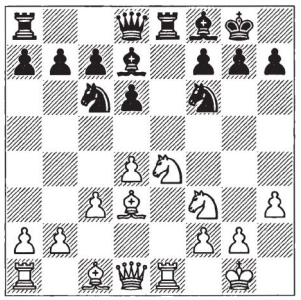
Petroff Defence

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘xe5 d6 4 ♘f3 ♘xe4 5 d4 ♗e7 6 ♗d3 ♘f6 7 h3 0-0 8 0-0 ♘c6

The same development square for the knight as in Fischer-Gheorghiu, but a more accurate move-order, in that it is now possible to meet 9 c4 safely with 9...♘b4.

9 c3 ♖e8 10 ♖e1 ♗d7 11 ♘bd2 ♗f8 12 ♘e4 *(D)*

B

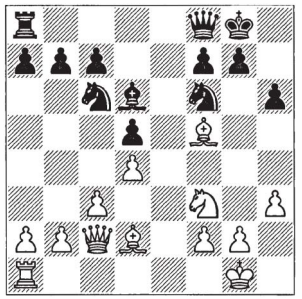


12...d5

The inflexibility of the b8-knight's development with ...♘c6 means that Black feels obliged to recover some space in the centre, even at the cost of weakening the dark squares, in order to avoid suffocation. White keeps slightly the freer position, but Black is able to defend.

13 ♘g3 ♗d6 14 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 15 ♕c2 h6 16 ♗d2 ♕f8 17 ♘f5 ♗xf5 18 ♗xf5 *(D)*

B



18...♖e8

Black has surrendered the bishop-pair, but this is no great disaster with such a stable pawn formation. Both black knights are useful.

19 ♗d3 ♘d8 20 c4 c6 21 cxd5

21 c5!? – Korchnoi.

21...♘xd5 22 ♗c4 ♗b4 23 ♗xd5 cxd5 24 ♗e3 ♗a5 25 ♖c1 ♗b6 26 ♕f5 ♕d6

Black would even be better if he could activate his one poorly placed piece, the knight on d8.

27 ♖c8 ♕e6 28 ♕xe6 ♖xe6 29 ♘e5 ♖e7 ½-½

Not very exciting, but a few steady draws with the black pieces are better than a string of losses. It is important to know how to hold the balance.

Game P8.3

Tal – Smyslov

USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1971

Petroff Defence

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘xe5 d6 4 ♘f3 ♘xe4 5 d4 ♗e7 6 ♗d3 ♘f6 7 h3 0-0 8 0-0 ♖e8 9 c4 ♘bd7!

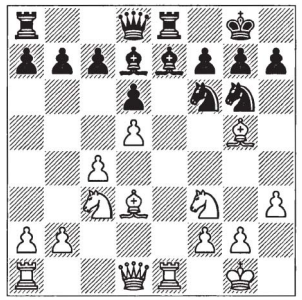
Much better than Gheorghiu's move 9...♘c6?!. Smyslov here makes the argument that the knight is best placed on f8, where it helps protect the kingside, and does not obstruct any pawn advances he might wish to make on the queenside.

10 ♘c3 ♘f8 11 d5

This is what Petrosian was trying to avoid when he played 8...c6. Smyslov's ...♘d7-f8 manoeuvre is, however, far more economical than Gheorghiu's ...♘c6-b4-a6, and Black has excellent chances to hold the equilibrium.

11...♘g6 12 ♖e1 ♗d7 13 ♗g5 *(D)*

B



13...♘h5!

This has to be carefully judged, as Black's minor pieces soon reach apparently highly insecure positions, and if they are painlessly driven back, Black is likely to suffer the same sort of fiasco as in the Fischer-Gheorghiu

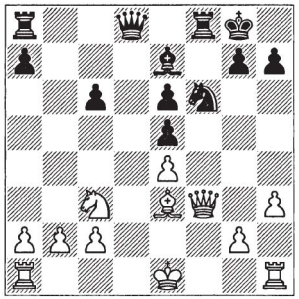
game. Smyslov, however, has carefully weighed up the position, and seen that the outposts are safe enough for the time being.

14 ♗d2 ♘hf4 15 ♗f1 ♗f6 16 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 17 ♕c1 ♗e5! 18 ♕e1 ♗f6 19 ♔h2 ♗f5 20 ♕e3 ♗d3 ½-½

Game P8.4
Hübner – Petrosian
Seville Ct (7) 1971
Sicilian Defence,
Scheveningen Variation

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♘c3 e6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 ♘f6 6 ♗e3 ♗e7 7 f4 ♘c6 8 ♕f3 e5 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 fxe5 dxe5 11 ♗c4 0-0 12 h3 ♗e6 13 ♗xe6 fxe6 *(D)*

W



Black's pawns are evidently weaker than in the Fischer-Petrosian game, and it is hard to see how Black can create a minor-piece outpost on d4 or f4. Any potential attack on the kingside has, however, been blotted out, and Black may aim for counterplay along the b-file. Black's pawn-structure is ugly but effective.

14 ♕e2 ♖b8

Subsequent theory preferred the alternative occupation of the b-file by 14...♕b8, and if 15 ♖b1, then 15...♘e8 = Kasparov; see *ECO* B82.

15 0-0 ♖xb2

∓ Petrosian, Suetin; ± Kasparov!

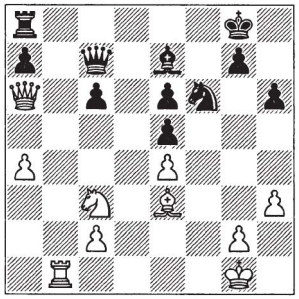
16 ♖ab1 ♖b4 17 ♕a6 ♕c7 18 a3 ♖xb1 19 ♖xb1 ♖a8 20 a4!

20 ♖b7? ♕c8 ∓ Petrosian, Suetin.

20...h6?! *(D)*

20...♘d7 is unclear – Petrosian, Suetin.

W



21 a5?!

Petrosian and Suetin note that White could have reached a favourable ending, despite being a pawn down, after 21 ♕b7! ♕xb7 22 ♖xb7 ♗d8 23 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 24 ♗xa7 ♗a5 25 ♘d1 ♘xe4. The negative side of the doubled isolated pawns shows itself; the pawns are ineffective, and possibly Black would even prefer to play this without his e6-pawn, as it takes an important square from his king. White's outside passed pawn outweighs both Black's e-pawns.

21...♔h7! 22 ♕b7 ♕xa5!

Yet another Petrosian trademark – the defensive exchange sacrifice. We see now why Petrosian was so eager to remove his king from the back rank.

23 ♕xa8 ♕xc3 24 ♕xa7 ♘xe4

Black is much better, with complete control of the centre; the fact that he has a strong knight rather than a rook does not worry him.

25 ♖f1 ♗h4

25...♘g3! Petrosian, Suetin.

26 ♖f7?! ♗f6 27 ♔h2 ♕xc2 28 ♕d7 ♕b3 29 ♗f2 ♕d5 30 ♕a7 ♕d2 31 ♕e3 ♕c2 32 ♗e1 c5 33 h4 c4 34 ♖c7 ♕d3 35 ♕f3 ♕b1 36 ♕e3 ♘d6 37 ♕d2 ♘f5 38 ♖xc4 e4 39 ♕c2?

A time-trouble blunder by Hübner, but Black would still be winning even after 39 g3 e3 40 ♕e2 ♘d4 41 ♕xe3 ♕a2+.

39...♕xe1 40 ♖xe4 ♗e5+ 0-1

Game P9
Tal – Petrosian
USSR Ch (Erevan) 1975
Ruy Lopez, Chigorin System

The Soviet Championship of 1975 was held in Erevan, the Armenian capital, and was a double success for the Armenians, with Petrosian taking first place and rising star Vaganian being one of four players (along with Gulko, Romanishin and Tal), to share second place, half a point behind. It was a tight contest, with only 1½ points splitting first (10/15) and eighth (8½) places, with Petrosian just squeezing through, as *primus inter pares*. While Erevan could not quite be called Petrosian's home city (he grew up in Tbilisi, Georgia, which at the time had a very large Armenian population, then briefly moved to Erevan in his mid-teens before settling in Moscow), it was still a definite home success.

Quite often the art of doing well in all-play-alls is in avoiding trouble with the black pieces when playing your nearest rivals. And there could be few more dangerous rivals than Mikhail Tal, who, though not quite as wildly fearsome as when he became World Champion as a young man in 1960, had gained a lot in all-round solidity. Although this game was played fifteen years after Tal's great moment, and although Tal had physical health problems, he should by no means be thought of as a declining force. Indeed, in the late 1970s he was moving towards a second peak, pushing his rating past 2700 for a while. There are several statistical pitfalls in trying to make exact comparisons between ratings twenty years apart, but this would probably equate to something approaching 2750 in today's terms.

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘a5

The main line of the Closed Ruy Lopez is still a stern test of the positional skills of both players. While there are lines in which the position opens up suddenly, and in which calculating ability takes on supreme importance, what is involved in most lines, for the next few moves at least, is a battle of manoeuvring in a position

which is neither wholly open nor wholly closed.

Petrosian in this game takes the most direct approach, playing the Chigorin Variation, in which Black aims for a quick ...c5, ensuring that he has direct pressure against White's pawn-centre in the event of d4. Black also gains space on the queenside, and yet paradoxically the rapid deployment of his queenside pieces will itself be a cause for anxiety. In most lines, though not the one chosen by Petrosian, the knight on a5 soon returns to c6, which loses time, and which also poses the question of what exactly he is going to do with the queen's bishop, none of the development squares looking particularly appealing.

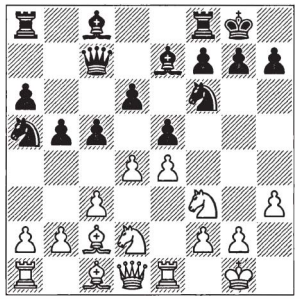
The Breyer Variation (9...♘b8 10 d4 ♘bd7 followed by ...♗b7) was popular during the 1970s, being a favourite choice of Spassky among others. Black strongpoints e5, and ensures that his queenside pieces do not obstruct each other. While the line is very solid, White has an unquestioned advantage in space. More recently, largely as a result of the influence of various Kasparov-Karpov matches, the Zaitsev Variation (9...♖e8 10 d4 ♗b7) has become fashionable. Black concerns himself with speedy development, at the cost of leaving one or two weaknesses, particularly on f7. As a result, play is sharpened, unless of course White is content with a quick draw with 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 ♘f3.

10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♕c7 12 ♘bd2 *(D)*

12...♗e6?!

In 1975, Petrosian was experimenting with ways to keep this position closed, avoiding the standard lines

B



with 12...cxd4 13 cxd4 ♘c6. The bishop is a little too exposed on e6 however, and White has various ways to secure an advantage.

12...♗d7!?, which Petrosian tried a couple of months earlier against Karpov (Supplementary Game P9.1) looks sounder; Black does not leave White with unnecessary targets. Petrosian reached a steady draw against Karpov, and also against Kasparov a few years later (Supplementary Game P9.2). It is difficult to say why Petrosian preferred 12...♗e6 against Tal.

13 ♘f1

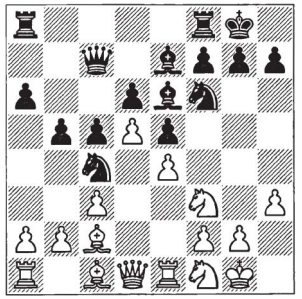
After 13 dxe5 dxe5 14 ♘g5, which had been tried in some earlier games, Petrosian presumably had in mind allowing the exchange of the bishop on e6, and using the doubled e-pawns to control all the key central squares.

The real objection to Black's play is that White can simply gain a tempo with 13 d5. In comparison with lines in which Black has already exchanged pawns on d4, White will not be able to mount an invasion along the c-file, but there are other well-established ways for White to besiege the queenside in the Ruy Lopez; for example, 13 d5 ♗d7 14 b3 ♘b7 15 ♗b2 a5 16 ♕e2 b4 17 a4 ± Mukhin-Ivanov, USSR 1977. If Black does not advance on the queenside in this line, White can improve his position on the kingside with ♘f1 and various knight and pawn manoeuvres.

13...♘c4 14 d5 *(D)*

Black's usual consolation is that when White plays d5 (with a d4-e4 vs d6-e5 pawn-centre), White's gain of space comes at the cost of a tempo. If, however, d5 comes with gain of tempo, Black no longer has this consolation.

B



14...♗c8

We see now that Black has invested *two* whole tempi in luring the d-pawn forward. This was probably not a wise investment. It is instructive to observe the measures that Petrosian now takes to keep out of trouble.

We can start by asking, for example, why he did not prefer 14...♗d7. Such questions are not easy to answer with any precision, since we are still at the stage of the game where there is still much scope for intricate manoeuvring, with either side having a wide choice of moves at any one turn. At the very least, it may be noted that 14...♗d7 would be no improvement on the game after 15 g4 h5 16 gxh5 ♗xh3, when there is a direct transposition. Petrosian may also have felt a little uneasy at the thought of leaving the e7-bishop undefended, and of taking away a possible knight retreat on d7. It is not even necessarily the king's knight that would want to go to d7. If, for example, 14...♗d7 15 b3 ♘b6 16 a4 White is starting to tie Black up on the queenside; with the bishop on c8, however, Black's position would still be flexible after 16...♖b8, with ...♘bd7 in reserve if White plays a5.

Naturally there are other ways for White to handle the position, for example with 16 ♘h4, and other ways to try to prove that the bishop's occupation of d7 might be perhaps slightly defective. It just seems a little more flexible to play the bishop right back.

15 g4!? *(D)*

Enterprising, though of course far from compulsory.

B

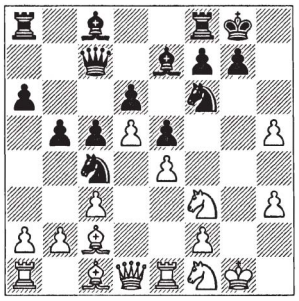
15...h5!

Bold action is required to prevent White from steamrollering on the kingside with ♘g3-f5, etc. Meeting the pawn thrust with ...h5 is quite a common theme in the King's Indian;

for example, 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 e5 7 ♘ge2 c6 8 d5 cxd5 9 cxd5 a6 10 ♕d2 ♘bd7 11 g4 h5!?, as played by Gligorić several times in the late 1950s. In the Tal-Petrosian game in the Ruy Lopez however, the pawn on h5 is unprotected by any companion on g6, hence the capture on h5 is possible, indeed strong.

16 gxh5 *(D)*

B



16...♗xh3

For tactical reasons, it has to be the rear pawn that goes, even if the front pawn is the more dangerous. After 16...♘xh5? 17 b3 ♘b6 18 ♘xe5 White safely runs away with an extra central pawn.

On 16...♕d7?!, Tal gives 17 b3!, and then 17...♘b6 18 ♘g5 ♘h7 19 ♘xh7 ♔xh7 20 ♖e3 ±. We may add that the piece sacrifice with 17...♕xh3? does not lead anywhere after 18 bxc4 ♗g4 19 ♘1h2 ♗xh5 20 ♗d3, when White is ready to play ♗f1; 18 ♘g5!? ♕xc3 19 ♖b1 ♘b6 20 ♗d2 ♕d4 21 ♘f3 ♗g4 22 ♘1h2 ♗xh5 23 ♕c1, trapping the black queen in mid-board, is even stronger.

17 ♘3h2 *(D)*

B

17...g6

An interesting moment for the analyst, not least because Tal and Kasparov, two of the greatest players of all time, appear at first to have divergent opinions here. Tal in his *Informator* notes appends an exclamation mark to Petrosian's 17...g6, suggesting that 17...♗xf1 18 ♘xf1 would favour White. Yet when this position was reached (with the sole difference that Black's knight stood on b6 rather than on c4) in Kasparov-Petrosian, Banja Luka 1979 (Supplementary Game P9.2), Kasparov gave 17...♗xf1 an exclamation mark, and suggested that 17...g6 was inferior. Does the slight difference in the positioning of the knights make such an enormous difference to Black's play? What is happening?

If we look at actual variations analysed and played, we see that after 17...♗xf1 18 ♘xf1, Tal gives (with Black's knight on c4) 18...g6 19 ♘g3 ♔g7 20 ♔h1 ♖h8 21 ♖g1 ±. Kasparov-Petrosian, on the other hand, continued (with Black's knight on b6) 18...♕d7 19 ♘g3 ♕h3 20 ♕f3, etc., with perhaps a slight edge to White. The obvious difference is that Tal does not consider 18...♕d7 in his notes; is this a misassessment by Tal, or could it be that the advanced positioning of the knight on c4 somehow means that Black lacks the time for 18...♕d7, bringing the queen to the kingside? If we play carefully through the Kasparov-Petrosian move-order, *but with the knight on c4* (as in Tal-Petrosian), then after 17...♗xf1 18 ♘xf1 ♕d7 19 ♘g3 ♕h3 20 ♕f3 g6 21 ♗d1 (21 ♗g5?, trying to take advantage of the c4-knight's distance from f6, is distinctly premature due to 21...♘g4!, the point being 22 ♗xe7?? ♕h2+ 23 ♔f1 ♘d2+) 21...♖fe8 22 a4! (rather than 22 ♕g2, which was the best that Kasparov had), Black is in trouble on the queenside.

The basic problem that Petrosian had in the earlier game against Tal is that the apparently active knight on c4 is really only pseudo-active, and does nothing to restrain White's thematic break with a4. We may regard the kingside as the primary sector of play, and the queenside as secondary. *If, however, prophylactic measures are incomplete in the secondary sector of play, it often becomes difficult for the defender to transfer forces towards the primary sector of play.* The implication is that a strategically complete defensive plan generally encompasses the whole board, rather than merely the primary sector of play. From the attacker's point of view, it is worth keeping an eye open to possibilities of opening up play in secondary sectors, if in the cut and thrust of play such sectors find themselves under-defended.

As for how strong 17...g6 is, we shall see shortly.

18 ♘g3 ♔g7 *(D)*

W

19 ♔h1

Given an exclamation mark by Tal, but this verdict is open to dispute.

Black has rebuilt his defences around the g6-square, on the basis that it is necessary to keep some grip on the light squares in order to prevent the kingside from collapsing. Although we are taught that in general it is not a good idea to advance pawns in front of your king when under fire, there are several specific exceptions. On move 15, Petrosian played ...h5 since the damage this inflicted on White's kingside pawn-structure was greater than the damage caused to Black's own structure. Then on move 17, Petrosian followed up with ...g6 because he needed to do this to set up the barricades, with ...♔g7, ...♖h8, etc. Petrosian would have been aware that his rook wanted to be on the h-file, for both defensive and counter-attacking purposes, and that this could not realistically be achieved with a pawn still on g7; that square is needed for the king.

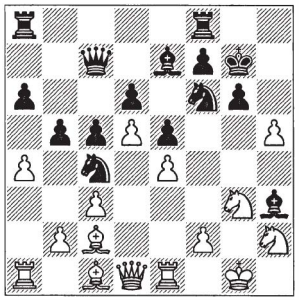
White can of course exchange pawns on g6 at some stage, but Black

still keeps a pawn on this square. The remaining pawn will need a stick of dynamite, or perhaps a piece sacrifice to move. To prepare such an assault, Tal decides he wants his rook on g1, and therefore plays his king to h1, but the consummation of White's attack requires the exchange of White's h-pawn for Black's g-pawn, and this leaves the white king on an open file which needs shielding. The knight on h2 provides such a shield, but it also removes a potentially useful piece from the attacking force. There is an element of suspicion that White's plan allows Black just that tiny degree of freedom that the hard-pressed defender needs to set his affairs in order.

19 ♕f3 is the obvious alternative. Tal then gives 19...♖h8 20 ♘f5+ ♗xf5! 21 h6+ ♔h7 22 exf5 g5!, when Black's problems are over, as White will be unable to open up further lines against the king. Kasparov gives (with Black's knight on b6 instead of c4) 20 h6+ ♔g8 21 ♘f5 as being to White's advantage, but g8 seems a strange square for the king, leaving dangers of a strong queen check along the g-file if Black ever plays ...gxf5. It would be more natural to play 20...♔f8!, and if 21 ♘f5, then 21...gxf5 22 ♕xh3 fxe4 with counterplay. Quieter lines by White leave the h-pawn as a weakness. White has to react with a little more subtlety to extract the maximum from the position. Black's defensive plan will involve ...♖h8, *whether White plays on the kingside or not*. It is pointless for White to play elaborate attacking schemes on the kingside if they only succeed in forcing Black to do what he was going to do anyway. The game plan of ♔h1 and ♖g1 swallows two tempi, while ♕f3 obstructs the f-pawn and foregoes the possibility of placing extra pressure on the queenside with ♕d3 or ♕e2.

The plan therefore suggests itself of starting queenside play with 19 a4! *(D)*.

B



The immediate pressure on the a-file means that Black will have no time for 19...♖h8 20 h6+ ♔f8? 21 axb5. 20...♔h7 avoids immediate material loss, but Black is uncomfortable after 21 ♕f3.

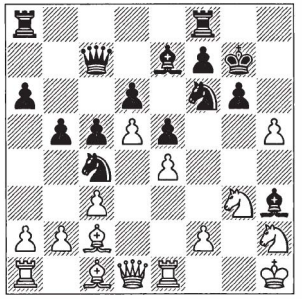
So Black must make a purely defensive move on the queenside before launching the counter-attack on the kingside; naturally this helps White. If Black tries, by analogy with the actual game, 19...♘b6, then 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♖xa8 followed by f4 favours White. The knight recapture leaves the black knight a long way away from the strategically critical square e5, while the rook capture (21...♖xa8 22 f4) takes away an important guard from the kingside. 19...♖ab8 20 axb5 axb5 21 b3 ♘b6 22 f4 also favours White, despite the apparent openness around his king.

Black's best reply to 19 a4 might well be 19...b4, keeping the a-file closed. An exchange of pawns on b4 might well allow Black the chance of a later ...♘c4-b6-d7-c5 manoeuvre. 20 ♕f3 should still favour White though.

Again it is interesting to note that if Black's knight had been on b6 (as in Kasparov-Petrosian) rather than on c4 (as in Tal-Petrosian), the standard Ruy Lopez thrust with a4 would not have been so effective. Petrosian's move-order in the later game must be regarded as more accurate.

Now we return to the position after 19 ♔h1 *(D)*.

B

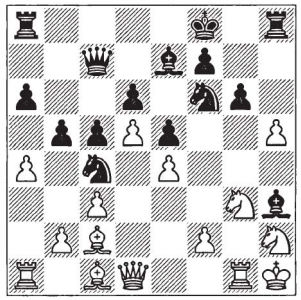


19...♖h8 20 ♖g1 ♔f8 21 a4 *(D)*

Awarded an exclamation mark by Tal, though by comparison with two moves earlier, it is difficult to see how the preparatory moves ♔h1 and ♖g1 have helped White, given that Black has made two useful defensive moves in the same time.

As far as the position actually reached is concerned, White could also quite reasonably have tried 21 ♕f3, but a little probing on the queenside can do no harm, and might well benefit the cause.

B



21...♘b6

Black cannot play 21...♘xh5?, since after 22 ♘xh5 ♖xh5 23 ♕xh5 gxh5 24 ♗h6+ ♔e8 25 ♖g8+ ♔d7 26 ♖xa8 (Tal), White has more than enough for the queen.

A more difficult decision to make is whether to meet the threatened capture on b5 with the cautious text-move, allowing the exchange of rooks on the a-file and the temporary decentralization of the black knight, or whether to play more aggressively with 21...♖b8, ceding the a-file but retaining the possibility of doubling rooks on the h-file. Much depends on how fearsome White's kingside initiative is likely to become. If White's kingside ambitions are easily contained, then Black has no need to fear a white rook on the a-file, and can avoid simplification and get on with his counter-attack. If, though, White can create genuine pressure on the kingside, then the thought of the rook on the a-file advancing and giving crossfire towards the kingside is incentive enough to offer simplification.

Perhaps the critical line if Black wants to keep rooks on is 21...♖b8 22 axb5 axb5 23 b3 (in order to avoid

embarrassments such as 23 ♕f3 gxh5 24 ♘f5 ♗xf5 25 ♕xf5 ♕d7 26 ♕g5?? ♘g4, trapping the queen) 23...♘b6 24 ♕f3! gxh5 (24...♘xh5? 25 ♘xh5 ♖xh5 26 ♖xg6; now, however, the h-file is closed, allowing freedom for White's knight on h2) 25 ♘f5 and now:

1) 25...♗g4?! 26 ♕g3 ♖g8 27 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 (27...♔xe7 28 ♕h4 with a massive pin) 28 f3 ♗c8 29 ♗h6+ ♔e8 30 ♕xg8+ ♘xg8 31 ♖xg8+ ♔d7 32 ♗g5! f6 33 ♗h6, and White wins the queen back with ♖g7. This variation was given by Tal if White had played 24 ♕f3 in the game; the non-exchange of rooks on the queenside makes no real difference to the combination.

2) 25...♗xf5 26 ♕xf5 ♕d7 27 ♕g5 ♘g4 (27...♖h7!?) 28 ♕d2 ♗h4 29 ♖g2 with an interesting and difficult position that probably favours White. 29...♖g8 can, for example, be met by 30 ♘xg4 ♖xg4 31 ♕h6+ ♔g8 32 ♕xh5, when the exchange of rooks is horrible for Black if another pair of rooks is kept in reserve. 29...♘xh2 keeps an extra pawn, but it is not clear how the rest of Black's pieces will co-ordinate; White must be better.

All in all, Petrosian's shrewd defensive sense was probably entirely correct when he decided to offer the exchange of rooks.

22 axb5 axb5 23 ♖xa8+ ♘xa8 *(D)*

24 hxg6

But now, with a pair of rooks off, this alternative method of continuing the attack may be contemplated. White would not have wanted the h-file open if both black rooks were still present!

24 ♕f3 is, with no queenside rooks present, less threatening than in the previous note. Tal gives 24...gxh5 25 ♘f5 ♗xf5 26 ♕xf5 ♘b6 27 ♗g5 ♘g4, though 26...♕d7, by analogy with the previous note, might be considered.

W

24...fxg6 25 ♘gf1

At long last, White starts to create real pressure along the g-file, at a time, furthermore, when one of Black's knights is well out of play. White's bishops are on adjacent diagonals, and will work well together if the position is opened up, but his knights are constrained by Black's pressure along the h-file. The one thing that tips the balance slightly in White's favour is his advantage in space, which might provide the motivation for a further pawn-push with f4, and which at the very least gives him more room to manoeuvre with his pieces.

Black is still on the defensive.

25...♔f7 *(D)*

Black's pieces are not yet sufficiently coordinated to justify the pawn sacrifice with 25...♗d8, with the idea of ...♕h7, as after 26 ♖xg6 White has ♖h6 in reserve.

26 ♕f3

Whether to attack with pieces or pawns – that is a perpetual dilemma in chess. The general principle would seem to be that if you have a sufficient

W

advantage in piece activity, and if your opponent has severe enough weaknesses to tie up his forces still further, then an attack with pieces alone will avoid all the unpredictabilities associated with pawn-breaks. If on the other hand the defender is constricted, but has enough in hand to cover all direct weaknesses, it will generally be necessary for the attacker to find some sort of pawn-break, opening up lines and squares for his pieces, in order to develop the initiative.

Here Tal tries to achieve everything with piece-play, but Petrosian is able to demonstrate that by keeping everything tight on the c8-h3 diagonal (very important!) he is able to hold back White's attack. The potential pin on the h-file is also important, since it means that the knight on h2 is ineffective in guarding the key square g4.

In his notes afterwards, Tal suggested it was time for a pawn-break – 26 f4 ±. This immediately presents Black with a difficult defensive decision, since if an exchange takes place on e5 with Black being forced to recapture with a pawn, White will have much the better pawn-structure (one pawn island, with a protected passed pawn, versus three), whereas if Black initiates the exchange with ...exf4, there is the danger that White can bring the light-squared bishop crashing into the attack after a timely e5.

It is an unrewarding task to try to defend an inferior pawn-structure *as well as* a less active piece formation – if one survives the middlegame, the endgame is still a problem. Black will want to try 26...exf4 27 ♗xf4, rather than allowing the exchange on e5. The panic reaction with 27...♘h5? 28 ♗e3 merely opens Black up along the f-file, so Black has to find other ways to deal with the e5 break. Quiet regrouping with 27...♘b6! is better, creating extra pressure on the d5-pawn, and envisaging a counter-attack along the a8-h1 diagonal if White should try e5 prematurely (28 e5? dxe5 29 ♗xg6+ ♔f8 gets White nowhere). He is also prepared, if necessary, to swing the knight to e5, after which a bishop-for-knight exchange on e5 would not do too much damage to Black's pawn-structure, as the exchange of White's dark-squared bishop would leave White weak on the dark squares, notably f4. 28 ♕c1 looks dangerous at first, as e5 is now a real threat, but Black has 28...♗g4! (threatening ...♗f3+), and the bishop will have time to slip back to h5 if necessary, giving extra protection to the weak pawn on g6.

White keeps an initiative after 26 f4, but Black's position should be fully defensible.

26...♕c8!

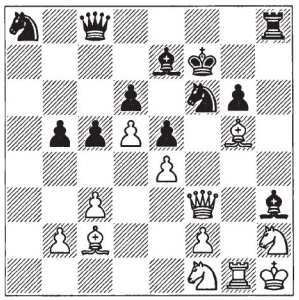
Black started his defensive campaign on move 15 by trying to soften White up on the c8-h3 diagonal, and it is only natural that at the critical point

he should consolidate his defences by packing this strategically critical diagonal. There is the small but significant point that the queen goes here rather than to d7 so as to keep a route open to the kingside via g8, for both attacking and defensive purposes, if need be. 'Just in case', but it could on occasion be vital.

27 ♗g5 *(D)*

Tal notes that 27 ♕g3 would be met by 27...♗g4. Black is at the very least able to retreat his bishop to h5 – but he can also try for more, as ...♖h3, ♕g2 ♗f3 is threatened!

B



The move played challenges Black's grip on g4.

27...♗xf1

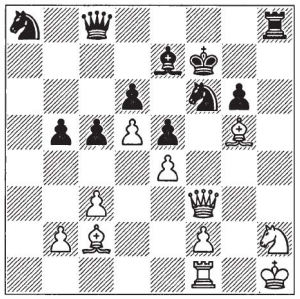
Black's control of g4 is too unstable for the trick with 27...♗g4 28 ♕g2 ♖h3 to work; Tal notes that 29 ♘d2! ♕h8 30 ♖a1 is in White's favour.

Black therefore opts for the most traditional of all methods of dealing with a kingside attack – he offers the exchange of queens.

28 ♖xf1 *(D)*

28 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 29 ♖xf1 keeps the tension a little longer without necessarily being better.

B



28...♕g4

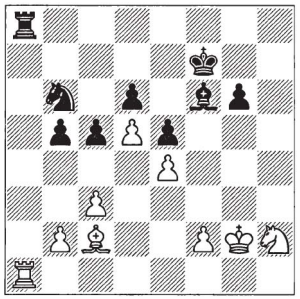
The light-square strategy continues, and carries Black to a safe endgame.

29 ♕g2

29 ♕g3 is more trappy, since if 29...♖h3?, then 30 ♗xf6! ± (Tal), but 29...♘b6 is safe enough.

29...♘b6 30 ♗xf6 ♕xg2+ 31 ♔xg2 ♗xf6 32 ♖a1 ♖a8 *(D)*

W



Neither player may be allowed to control the a-file, but the exchange that follows makes the draw a certainty, with opposite-coloured bishops, equal pawns, no significant pawn weaknesses, and neither side having the prospect of creating a passed pawn.

33 ♖xa8 ♘xa8 34 ♘f3 ♘b6 35 ♔f1 ½-½

By no means a spectacular game, but a good practical demonstration of how to hold a slightly inferior position together.

Supplementary Games

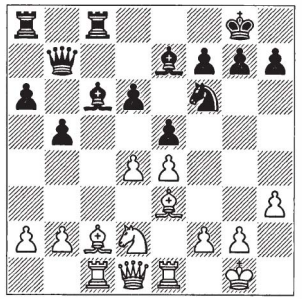
Game P9.1
Karpov – Petrosian
Milan 1975
Ruy Lopez, Closed Variation

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♕c7 12 ♘bd2 ♗d7!? 13 ♘f1 ♘c4 14 ♘e3

For 14 d5, see Game P9.2.

14...♘xe3 15 ♗xe3 ♖fc8 16 ♖c1 ♗c6 17 ♘d2 cxd4 18 cxd4 ♕b7 *(D)*

W

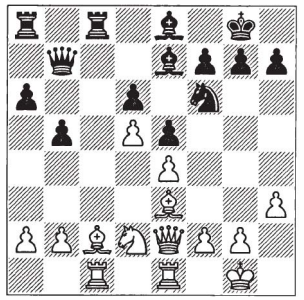


19 d5

'Crossing the equator'. Minev in *Informator 20* suggests 19 ♕f3 d5 20 dxe5 ♘xe4 21 ♗b3 ±, but Black does not have to open the centre so quickly. 19...♗e8!, as well as providing a useful extra guard on f7, also provides Black with possible counterplay along the c-file; if 20 ♘b3, then Black replies 20...a5!.

19...♗e8 20 ♕e2 *(D)*

B

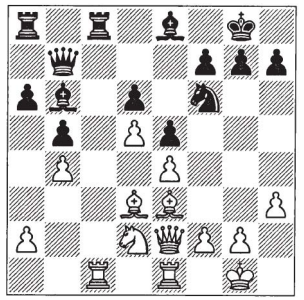


20...♗d8!

The position is starting to look troublesome for Black, as White has an unquestioned space advantage, and Black has a clear weakness on c6. Petrosian does not panic, however, and starts a systematic process of exchanging. First his bad bishop must be brought into play and exchanged for White's active bishop on e3; and then rooks must be exchanged on the c-file to ensure that White does not have decisive control of that file. Once these exchanges have been completed, Black may cover his queenside weaknesses without any great difficulty.

21 b4 ♗b6 22 ♗d3 *(D)*

B



21...♗xe3 23 ♕xe3 ♖xc1 24 ♖xc1 ♖c8 25 ♘b3 ♖xc1+ 26 ♕xc1 ♗d7

The bishop now guards White's potential entry squares on c6 and c8; if the queen can continue to guard c7, Black is safe.

27 ♔h2 ♕b6 28 ♕d2 ♕c7 ½-½

Nothing to set the blood racing, but good solid equalizing play by Black.

Game P9.2

Kasparov – Petrosian

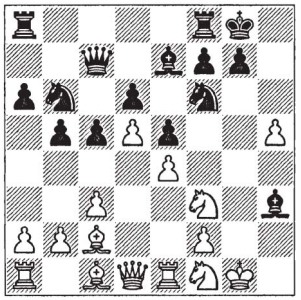
Banja Luka 1979

Ruy Lopez, Closed Variation

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♕c7 12 ♘bd2 ♗d7 13 ♘f1 ♘c4 14 d5!? ♘b6 15 g4 h5 16 gxh5 ♗xh3 *(D)*

The only difference from the Tal-Petrosian game is that here Black has a knight on b6 rather than on c4.

W



17 ♘3h2 ♗xf1 18 ♘xf1 ♕d7 19 ♘g3 ♕h3 20 ♕f3 g6 21 ♗d1 ♖fe8

Not 21...♘xh5?? 22 ♘f5 winning a piece.

22 ♕g2 ♕xg2+ 23 ♔xg2 ½-½

Although Kasparov in *Informator 27* suggests that White is still a little better. See notes to Tal-Petrosian for further commentary on this game. Black's knight proved more adept on b6 than on c4 (as in the Tal game).

Game P10

Kasparov – Petrosian

Tilburg 1981

Queen's Gambit Accepted

In one of the curious coincidences of chess history, the fates decreed that whenever Petrosian was to play Kasparov, Petrosian had the black pieces. The great young attacker as White, the unflappable and resourceful defender as Black – a recipe for some intense thematic battles! Honours finished even with two wins apiece in this clash of generations and styles.

The game featured here is from Tilburg 1981, where Petrosian showed that his strength and solidity in chess stayed with him almost to the end (he died of cancer in 1984). He scored three wins and eight draws to come second, half a point behind Beliavsky, with two other world champions (past and future), Spassky and Kasparov each scoring only 50%. Kasparov's performance was a disappointment, by the standards of some of his earlier prodigious achievements. As Bob Wade put it in his collaborative work

with Kasparov (*Fighting Chess: My Games and Career*), "he was the victim of the extreme resourcefulness that distinguishes the top grandmasters". The game below shows this resourcefulness; it is difficult to imagine any other player defending against, let alone beating, Kasparov from the position that Petrosian reached from the opening.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 e3 ♗g4 5 ♗xc4 e6

Petrosian finds another way to reach his favourite 'Caro-Slav' pawn formation, with the d-pawn exchanged, the queen's bishop outside the pawn-chain, a pawn on e6, and the possibility either of the solid defensive ...c6 or the counter-attacking ...c5. Kasparov plays to gain space on the kingside by h3 and g4.

6 h3 ♗h5 7 ♘c3 a6

This has more or less been abandoned by now, as the plan Kasparov chooses gives White a clear advantage in space. Black prepares to meet any attack on b7 by playing ...b5, and prepares to play ...♘c6 without having to worry about the pin with ♗b5, but this is slow, and does not develop any pieces.

The alternative is 7...♘bd7 8 0-0, but without much recent experience, the two latest *Informator* references at the time of writing being:

1) 8...♗d6 9 ♗e2 0-0 10 e4 e5 11 dxe5 ♘xe5 12 ♘d4 ♗c5 13 ♘b3 ♕xd1 14 ♖xd1 ♗b6 15 ♗g5! ♗xd1 16 ♖fxd1 ♘c4 17 ♗xf6 gxf6 18 ♘a4 with the better pawn-structure for White in the endgame, Stohl-Greenfeld, Olomouc 1996.

2) 8...♗e7 (by transposition) 9 e4 ♘b6 10 ♗e2 ♗g6 11 ♗d3 0-0 12 ♗e3 ♖c8 13 ♕e2 c5 14 ♖ad1 cxd4 15 ♘xd4 and White is much more mobile, Petronić-Matulović, Yugoslavia 1993.

The ...♗g4 system had a good reputation at the time of the Kasparov-Petrosian game, but more recently attention has reverted to the classical plan of ...e6, ...c5, ...a6, ...b5, ...♗b7, etc.

8 g4! ♗g6 9 ♘e5 ♘bd7 10 ♘xg6 hxg6 *(D)*

W

11 ♗f1!

The re-fianchetto of the bishop provides some useful shelter on the kingside, to allow White to castle there in safety while still retaining an advanced pawn formation.

11...c6

Petrosian makes no attempt to challenge White's pawn-centre directly, with the concomitant danger of opening the position prematurely, but prefers to keep the weakened light squares on the h1-a8 diagonal securely protected. His choice does not equalize, but neither do the alternatives cited by *ECO*, perhaps critical being 11...e5 12 ♗g2 exd4 13 exd4 ♖b8 14

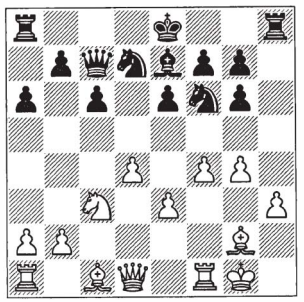
0-0 ♗e7 15 ♖e1 0-0 16 g5 ♘e8 17 h4, Oll-Bagirov, USSR 1984. White has unchallenged central control, and is ready to prise open Black's kingside pawn-cover with h5. Black's advance with the e-pawn has weakened his kingside defences more than it has damaged White's central pawn formation.

12 ♗g2 ♕c7 13 0-0 ♗e7 14 f4 *(D)*

White's spatial advantage looks terrifying. One of the main points of this move is to prevent Black from ever freeing himself with ...e5. Also, an ill-timed ...c5 can be met with g5 followed by d5; the f-pawn secures the pawn on g5.

The position is uncomfortable for Black. All he can do is sit tight, bring his king to relative (though not absolute) safety on the queenside, and wait for *White* to compromise his pawn-structure by making a pawn-break.

B



14...♘b6 15 g5 ♘fd7

15...♘fd5 16 e4 ± Petrosian.

16 ♕g4?!

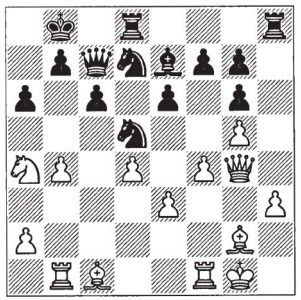
Possibly a misjudgement. It is difficult to see what useful purpose the queen serves here in the event of Black castling queenside. Indeed, if we look at the future career of the queen, she heads to b1 via g4, g3, e1, e2 and d3, a convoluted path. *In semi-closed positions such as this, with no immediate break in sight in the centre, and with the possibility of play later opening up on either flank, the standard plan is to keep the queen centralized.* 16 a4 looks better, and if 16...a5, then 17 ♕e2, when any attempt to break with ...c5 would leave a nasty hole on b5. If instead 16...c5, then 17 d5 ±.

16...0-0-0

Yet again, Petrosian castles queenside, not that there was any attractive alternative, since 16...0-0 is answered by 17 h4 followed by h5.

17 ♖b1 ♔b8 18 b4 ♘d5 19 ♘a4 *(D)*

B



19...f5!

The first sign of real life in Black's position, and the first indication that Kasparov is not going to be able to stroll unhindered through the queenside fortifications with (for example) ♗d2, ♖fc1, ♕e2, ♘c5, etc.

19...♘xb4?! is not such a good idea. Black, in opening up the b-file, does White's work for him. In *Informator*, Petrosian gives 20 ♗d2 ♘d5 (20...♕a5 21 ♘c5 is winning for White) 21 e4 f5 ±.

20 ♕g3

An unthematic square for the queen, but if 20 ♕e2 or 20 ♕d1, Black has 20...b5, followed by a knight fork on c3.

But Petrosian's pawn-push also involves a sacrifice; what happens if White accepts? Petrosian gives 20 gxf6 gxf6 21 ♕xe6 ♖de8 "with counterplay". The compensation is easy to see after 22 ♗xd5 cxd5 23 ♕xd5 ♖xh3; for example, 24 ♕f7 ♕c2 25 ♕xe8+ ♔a7 26 ♖b2 ♖g3+ 27 ♔h1 ♖h3+ with a draw. Matters are not so clear after 22 ♕g4!?.

At first it is difficult to see how Black establishes counterplay, since 22...f5 23 ♕xg6 gives Black no time to set up a light-square blockade before White can consolidate. 22...b5 23 ♗xd5 cxd5 24 ♘c5 gives Black no joy either. The pawn-pushes do not work, so Black should be concentrating instead on piece coordination – and quickly, before White can develop his queen's bishop! 22...♗d6! puts pressure on the e-pawn, and this cannot by nullified by 23 e4?! in view of 23...f5! 24 exf5 gxf5 25 ♕xf5 ♖ef8 and the f4-pawn falls while Black still retains the initiative. 23 ♘c5 is probably well met by 23...♘7b6, aiming for c4. 23 ♖b3 seems to present the most difficulties, when Black would presumably reply 23...♘f8. Black would then want to play ...f5, when his light-squared blockade in the centre does much to neutralize the effects of White's extra pawn. Then 24 e4 f5 25 exf5 gxf5 26 ♕xf5 ♘e6! would give Black strong counterplay. Maybe the best is 24 f5 g5 25 e4 ♘f4 26 ♗xf4 gxf4, when White must be regarded as substantially better, though Black has realistic chances of counterplay along the g-file and also against White's pawn-centre.

At the very least, Black is still in the game, and it is understandable why Kasparov should concede defeat in a minor skirmish (allowing Black to get in ...f5 without punishment) in order to concentrate on the main battle on the queenside.

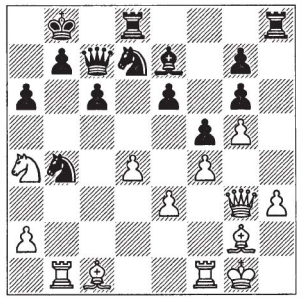
But why, when Black has been suffering from such a constricted position and White has so much extra room for his pieces, should Black suddenly have compensation when he lets drop a pawn? It is important to appreciate that it is not a '1-0' pawn sacrifice, but rather a '2-1' sacrifice, where Black loses a pawn, but succeeds in eliminating one of White's advanced pawns. White's spatial advantage is secured only by his having the more advanced pawns, while Black's constricted position is made defensible by having a very tight pawn-structure. Any advanced pawn formation will have a lot of empty space behind it – maybe a critical square which may no longer be protected, or perhaps a backward pawn – and this provides targets for the defender's counterplay. In the right circumstances, this might provide the justification for a '2-1' positional pawn sacrifice. An attacking pawn disappears, the defender has a variety of open lines where once there were pawns blocking the play, and these open lines help the defender to focus counterplay on squares and pawns weakened by the attacker's eagerness

to push pawns in the earlier play. Such a motif is possible even in the very early stages of the opening, in, for example, the Benko Gambit (1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6).

20...♘xb4 *(D)*

A difficult decision. Petrosian proceeds on the basis that he can grab the pawn and hope to beat back the attack, but Kasparov shows that the process is not so simple. There must have been a temptation to try 20...b5 21 ♘c5 ♘xc5 22 bxc5, after which Black is solid on the queenside and has a beautifully centralized knight on d5. Black's problem is that if White gets in e4 at the right moment, Black's kingside is going to become extremely fragile. White can manoeuvre for hours trying to set up the break; Black is not going to be able to eliminate the possibility permanently.

W

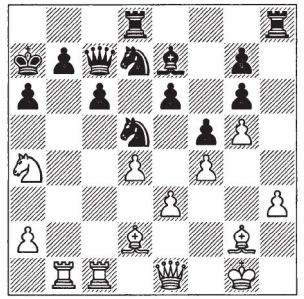


21 ♗d2 ♘d5 22 ♖fc1 ♔a7

Black prepares to bring his rooks behind his queenside pawns to offer them extra protection. It helps that with the kingside blocked, the rooks are not required for defensive tasks on both sides of the board.

23 ♕e1 *(D)*

B



23...♗a3

Defence is not just about passively defending weak spots. It is also about enhancing piece coordination, and creating obstructions to your opponent's piece coordination. After the bishop stab, it is surprisingly difficult for White to double rooks on the b-file; Black's minor pieces cover the important squares. Meanwhile, Black decides his queen and bishop work together better on the f8-a3 diagonal than on the blocked b8-h2 diagonal.

24 ♖c2

24 ♗a5 ♕d6 25 ♗xd8 ♗xc1 is safe enough for Black.

24...♕d6 25 ♖b3 ♕e7 26 ♕e2

Kasparov is playing a little too slowly. White does not know yet whether his queen belongs on e2 or b1. Meanwhile the bishop on g2 is underperforming, since it is unlikely that White will have reason to play ♗xd5 in the near future. 26 ♗f1! is logical, adding pressure to Black's queenside pawns, and preparing sacrifices in certain lines.

If 26...♖a8?!, White has 27 ♕b1, and if 27...b5?, then 28 ♖xc6. Or 26...♖b8 27 ♘b2, when 'simplification' with 27...♗xb2 28 ♖cxb2 does not solve Black's problems, with all White's pieces joining in the attack, while 27...♗d6 28 ♘c4 ♗c7 29 a4 leaves White ahead of the game, no moves having been wasted by the queen.

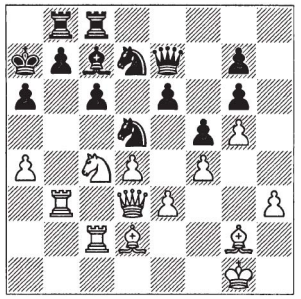
Needless to say, Petrosian is still under pressure in the game. He could have been under still more pressure.

26...♖b8

Petrosian was critical of this move, preferring 26...♖a8, followed by ...♖fc8 and ...b5.

27 ♕d3 ♗d6 28 ♘b2 ♖hc8 29 ♘c4 ♗c7 30 a4 *(D)*

B



30...b5!!

Brilliant defensive play, though the reader should also note how careful Petrosian has been to bring his rooks behind his queenside pawns.

The normal teaching is that, however much we are provoked, it is not a good idea to make unforced pawn moves in front of a king that is under attack. It may feel good to prod a piece and force it to move away temporarily, but the defender usually comes to regret it when the pawn which has advanced is no longer able to control key defensive squares.

The counter-argument here is one of necessity. Black's pawn-structure has already been weakened; he would far rather his pawn was still on a7 and his king on a8. With the pawn-structure as it is, the danger is not so much that lines will be opened up (they are already open), but rather that White will be able to fix the queenside pawns with a5 and prepare to step up the pressure at his leisure against the b7-pawn. Passive defence will not help Black in the long run, so Petrosian boldly plays ...b5, recognizing the dangers to his king, but aware too that he has given his pieces some more room to manoeuvre.

31 axb5

31 ♘a3!?, aiming to gain a tempo by the hit on c6, is best met by bold pawn-play: 31...bxa4!. After 32 ♖xc6, it turns out that Black cannot quite get away with accepting the sacrifice, the main line being 32...♖xb3?! 33 ♕xa6+ ♔b8 34 ♖xe6 ♘c5 35 dxc5 ♕xc5 36 ♖c6 ♕a7 (36...♘b4? 37 ♖b6+ and mate next move; 36...♕xa3 37 ♗xd5 ♖b7 38 ♖b6! mates) 37 ♗xd5 ♖xa3 38 ♕b5+ ♕b7 39 ♖a6!, winning.

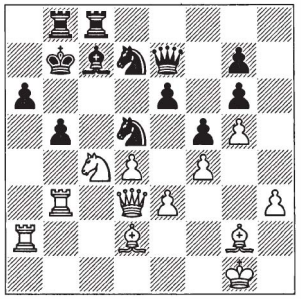
Black can, however, defend more imaginatively; if the protective pawn-cover has gone, the barricades must be set up with pieces instead. 32...♘7b6?! is not as solid as it looks, Nunn giving 33 ♖b1! ♖b7 34 ♗xd5! exd5 35 ♖b4! (threatening ♕xa6+!) 35...a5 36 ♖b1, when the weakened light squares make life very difficult for Black. 32...♖b6! holds. Both white rooks are now under attack, implying welcome simplification for Black after 33 ♖bxb6 (33 ♗xd5? axb3) 33...♘7xb6.

31...cxb5 32 ♖a2 ♔b7 *(D)*

Petrosian is not going to fall for the elementary 32...bxc4?? 33 ♖xa6+ ♔xa6 34 ♕xc4+ ♔a7 35 ♕a4+.

Kasparov suggested in *The Test of Time* that 32...♗d6 33 ♖xb5 ♖xb5 34 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 35 ♕xb5 ± would have been more accurate for Black. However, Kasparov's claim of a win in the line Petrosian plays is, as we shall see, not beyond dispute.

W



33 ♗b4

33 e4 fxe4 34 ♕xe4 carries a spectacular threat (35 ♖xb5+ axb5 36 ♕xd5+ exd5 37 ♗xd5#), but the defence is straightforward: 34...♕f7!.

Kasparov claims a win with 33 ♘a3. Then:

1) 33...♘7b6 34 ♘xb5 axb5 35 ♕xb5 ♖d8 (35...♖a8 36 ♗xd5+ exd5 37 ♕xd5+) 36 ♗b4 ♕e8 37 ♕a6+ ♔c6 38 ♗c5 ♔d7 (38...♖a8 39 ♖xb6+) 39 ♗f1! and Black is helpless.

2) 33...♗b6 34 ♘c2! (quiet, but very difficult to meet) 34...♖a8 35 ♘b4 ♕d6 36 e4 fxe4 37 ♕xe4 ♖a7 38 ♕xg6 ♗xd4+ 39 ♔h1 ♘7b6 40 f5. Kasparov claims a win here, without giving further analysis. A strange position at which to curtail the analysis, with both players having active pieces and exposed kings, and Black being for the moment a pawn up. White does seem to be winning just here, but Black could have played more accurately a move earlier with 39...♗c5! (instead of 39...♘7b6). White would not want the knight on b4 to be exchanged, but after 40 ♘xd5 exd5 41 ♕xd6 ♗xd6 42 ♗xd5+ ♔b8, it will be difficult to convince a sceptic that White is going to force a win, particularly as the most direct try 43 ♗e6?! allows 43...♘c5.

Kasparov suggests that the position is extremely difficult to get to grips with, even with analysis. In a practical game, everything is both simpler and more difficult. No player in the world could be expected, under tournament conditions, to calculate deeply enough to gain a full analytical understanding of such a strange and complicated position, and the players are released from the obligation to try to discover the underlying truth. All they can do is 'play moves', according to the best of their abilities. Petrosian has been playing some extremely good moves, although the best is yet to come. Kasparov was too hard on himself in giving 33 ♗b4 a question mark.

33...♕e8!

So that when the d7-knight moves, the b5-pawn has extra protection.

To defend this type of position, the usual technique is to make sure that the pawns on the light squares (and the pinned knight also) are given the utmost protection, while only the basic minimum cover is given to the empty dark squares. Black can live with a weak dark square or two, but if any of the light-squared pawns fall at an inopportune moment, the whole position collapses.

34 ♗d6

Kasparov notes that a draw was possible with 34 ♗a5 ♕e7! 35 ♗b4. Petrosian suggested 34 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 35 ♗xd6 ♖a8 36 e4, but without indicating anything clear.

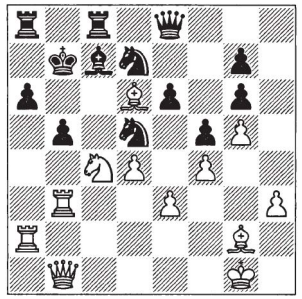
34...♖a8

Cutting out any sacrifices on a6.

35 ♕b1 *(D)*

White can force a draw with 35 e4 fxe4 36 ♕xe4 (threatening ♖xb5+ followed by ♕xd5+) 36...♘b6! 37 ♕xe6 ♕xe6 38 ♘a5+ ♔a7 39 ♘c6+ ♔b7 40 ♘a5+, but the win is elusive.

B



35...♔c6!!

A stunning move, bringing in the king as a fully active member of the defence team. Technically, the point is that two of White's minor pieces have now come under threat, forcing White to retreat. Over the board, a move such as this must have had a devastating impact, and Kasparov, who freely admitted to total confusion, promptly blunders.

The standard annotator's cliché in such a position might be to suggest that "only Petrosian could have thought of that". I put this to the test at a recent Barnet Schools' U-14 coaching week in North London, and was gratified to see that 35...♔c6 was selected, without prompting, as one of the candidate moves, and that it attracted a fair degree of support as the best move. You don't have to be a genius to defend a difficult position, you just have to find the right moves!

After the more prosaic 35...♘7b6 36 ♘a5+ ♔a7 37 ♗c5, Black would still have been under pressure.

36 ♖ba3?

White tries to punish the king flight.

Petrosian gives a narrow route to the draw with 36 ♗xc7 bxc4 37 ♖b7 ♖xc7 38 ♖xa6+ ♖xa6 39 ♕b5+ ♔d6 40 ♕xa6+ ♔e7 (40...♖c6 41 ♕a3+ ♘c5 42 dxc5+ ♖xc5 43 ♗xd5 ♔xd5 44 ♖b6 leaves Black in a mating-net) 41 ♗xd5 ♖xb7 42 ♗xb7 ♕b8 =. Trying for more with 36...♔xc7?! would be unwise, as White would have genuine compensation for the pawn after 37 ♘a5 (37 ♘b2!? – Kasparov), and if 37...♘7b6, then 38 e4, while 37...♔b6 38 ♖ab2! ♘b8 (38...♔xa5?? 39 ♖xb5+) 39 ♗f1! ♘c3 40 ♕d3 ♔xa5 41 ♖xc3 leaves the black king much too exposed.

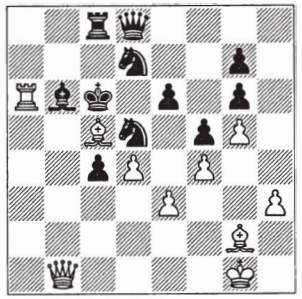
36...bxc4 37 ♖xa6+ ♖xa6 38 ♖xa6+ ♗b6 39 ♗c5 ♕d8 *(D)*

39...♘xc5?? 40 ♕xb6+.

40 ♕a1?!

The game has now swung heavily against Kasparov, but 40 ♕b1!? would have left Black with a final opportunity to go wrong before the time control. If nothing else, the pin on the knight on d5 leads to some deceptive optical illusions!

W



The threat would be 41 ♕a4+ ♔b7 42 ♖a7+ with perpetual check, and 40...♘xc5 41 dxc5 is ineffective. If 40...♖a8?, then 41 ♗e7! ♕b8 42 ♕a4+ wins for White, a very nice trap. Evidence that even a very strong player could fall for this is provided by Kasparov's note, "Nothing is changed by 40 ♕b4 ♖a8! (*sic*) 41 ♕a4+ ♔b7, etc".

The one way to break the attack would be another king move: 40...♔b7! and White has nothing.

40...♘xc5 41 dxc5 ♔xc5 42 ♖a4 0-1

A gem of resourceful defensive play against an opponent who was clearly identifiable as the next World Champion. And an excellent place to leave our section on Petrosian.

Index of Openings

Numbers refer to pages.

Caro-Kann Defence
B14 160; 171; 172
B16 69
B18 138

Sicilian Defence
B34 43; 55
B42 114
B48 181
B82 200

French Defence
C07 37
C11 77

Petroff Defence
C42 190; 197; 198; 199

Scotch Four Knights
C47 104

Evans Gambit
C51 35

Giuoco Piano
C54 26; 36; 37

Ruy Lopez (Spanish)
C60 21
C80 78
C97 201; 211; 212

Torre Attack
D03 172

Queen's Gambit: Slav
D14 112
D15 117; 127

Queen's Gambit Accepted
D22 212

Queen's Gambit Declined
D31 148
D35 86
D61 92; 101
D63 102
D67 103

Nimzo-Indian Defence
E26 134
E58 128; 136; 137

Index of Players

Numbers refer to pages. When a number appears in bold, the most recently named player had White. An italic number is used to denote a part-game.

Lasker's Opponents

Alekhine **86**, **103**
Capablanca **78**, 101, **102**
Chigorin **26**, **35**
Euwe **92**
Kan **112**
Napier 43
Nimzowitsch **69**
Pillsbury 21
Schlechter **37**, **55**
Spielmann **104**
Steinitz **36**, **37**

Petrosian's Opponents

Botvinnik **148**
Dückstein **138**
Fischer **77**, **114**, ***148***, **181**, **190**
Hübner **200**
Karpov **211**
Kasparov **212** (2)
Reshevsky **128**
Smyslov 117, **137**
Spassky **160**, **172**
Taimanov **136**
Tal **201**

Other Games

ANDERSSEN – **Morphy *10***
BOTVINNIK – **Tal 172**
BRONSTEIN – Smyslov 198
CHIGORIN – Steinitz *14*
EUWE – **Geller 134**
FISCHER – Gheorghiu 197
GAVILAN & STEINITZ – **Ponce & Chigorin *13***
GELLER – Euwe 134; Unzicker 127
GHEORGHIU – **Fischer 197**; Johanessen 171
GOLMAYO – **Steinitz *12***
JOHANESSEN – **Gheorghiu 171**
LABOURDONNAIS – McDonnell *9*
MCDONNELL – **Labourdonnais *9***
MORPHY – Anderssen *10*
PONCE & CHIGORIN – Gavilan & Steinitz *13*
SMYSLOV – **Bronstein 198**; **Tal 199**
STEINITZ – **Chigorin *14***; Golmayo *12*
TAL – Botvinnik 172; Smyslov 199
UNZICKER – **Geller 127**

Index of Games

Numbers refer to pages. Part-games are shown in italic.

Alekhine – Lasker, New York 1924 86
Alekhine – Lasker, Zurich 1934 103
Botvinnik – Petrosian, Moscow Wch (18) 1963 148
Bronstein – Smyslov, USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1971 198
Capablanca – Lasker, Havana Wch (11) 1921 102

Capablanca – Lasker, St Petersburg 1914 78
Chigorin – Lasker, St Petersburg 1895 26
Chigorin – Lasker, St Petersburg 1895 35
Chigorin – Steinitz, Havana Wch (3) 1889 *14*
Dückstein – Petrosian, Varna OL 1962 138
Euwe – Lasker, Zurich 1934 92
Fischer – Gheorghiu, Buenos Aires 1970 197
Fischer – Petrosian, Bled Ct 1959 *148*
Fischer – Petrosian, Buenos Aires Ct (3) 1971 77
Fischer – Petrosian, Buenos Aires Ct (5) 1971 190
Fischer – Petrosian, Buenos Aires Ct (7) 1971 114
Fischer – Petrosian, Santa Monica 1966 181
Geller – Euwe, Zurich/Neuhausen Ct 1953 134
Geller – Unzicker, Saltsjöbaden IZ 1952 127
Gheorghiu – Johanessen, Havana OL 1966 171
Hübner – Petrosian, Seville Ct (7) 1971 200
Kan – Lasker, Moscow 1935 112
Karpov – Petrosian, Milan 1975 211
Kasparov – Petrosian, Banja Luka 1979 212
Kasparov – Petrosian, Tilburg 1981 212
Labourdonnais – McDonnell, London, 4th match, 4th game 1834 *9*
Lasker – Capablanca, Havana Wch (10) 1921 101
Lasker – Napier, Cambridge Springs 1904 43
Lasker – Pillsbury, Hastings 1895 21
Morphy – Anderssen, Paris (7) 1858 *10*
Nimzowitsch – Lasker, St Petersburg 1914 69
Petrosian – Smyslov, USSR Ch (Moscow) 1951 117
Ponce & Chigorin – Gavilan & Steinitz, Havana 1889 *13*
Reshevsky – Petrosian, Zurich/Neuhausen Ct 1953 128
Schlechter – Lasker, Berlin Wch (7) 1910 55
Schlechter – Lasker, London 1899 37
Smyslov – Petrosian, Zurich/Neuhausen Ct 1953 137
Spassky – Petrosian, Moscow Wch (5) 1966 160
Spassky – Petrosian, Moscow Wch (7) 1966 172
Spielmann – Lasker, Moscow 1935 104
Steinitz – Golmayo, Havana 1889 *12*
Steinitz – Lasker, Moscow Wch (3) 1896 36
Steinitz – Lasker, Nuremberg 1896 37
Taimanov – Petrosian, Zurich/Neuhausen Ct 1953 136
Tal – Botvinnik, USSR Cht (Moscow) 1966 172
Tal – Petrosian, USSR Ch (Erevan) 1975 201
Tal – Smyslov, USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1971 199